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Brill's Companion to Valerius Flaccus

Edited by

Mark Heerink and Gesine Manuwald



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Roman terracotta 'Campana' relief (63.5 × 55.88 cm), found near the Porta Latina in Rome, probably dating from the first century CE and depicting Minerva, Tiphys and Argus building the Argo (British Museum).
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ISSN 1872-3357

ISBN 978 90 04 22741 5 (hardback)

ISBN 978 90 04 27865 3 (e-book)

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Acknowledgements

The editors would like to thank all contributors for their cooperation and patience, as well as for stimulating discussions at the various stages of planning and of the editorial process. The entire project has benefited from engagement with on-going Flavian epic activities such as conferences in several European countries in the last few years.

The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) has generously supported this volume in the framework of Mark Heerink's VENI grant 'The Poetics of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*'. Thanks are also due to Caroline van Erp, Irene van Rossum and Tessel Jonquière at Brill, to Luke Houghton for compiling the index and for assisting with proof-reading, to Esther Meijer for helping out with the bibliography and to Iveta Adams for her careful copy-editing. Working with all of them has been a pleasure throughout.

M. H./G. M.

Amsterdam/London, spring 2014

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Introduction

Mark Heerink and Gesine Manuwald

Scope of the Companion

While the late first-century rhetorician Quintilian famously regretted the death of Valerius Flaccus (*Inst.* 10.1.90: *multum in Valerio Flacco nuper amisimus*, ‘we have recently suffered a great loss in Valerius Flaccus’), modern readers have not shared his implied appreciation of the Flavian epic poet for a long time. Instead, in the wake of damning judgements of influential scholars, people have rather avoided Valerius’ poem (like others of the period), regarding it as imitative and inferior to Virgil and showing signs of a secondary belatedness. Fortunately, the tide has turned in the last few decades, stimulated by important publications, in particular Philip Hardie’s book *The Epic Successors of Virgil* (1993). Interest in Flavian epic is now burgeoning, with interesting work on all three poets—Valerius Flaccus, Statius and Silius Italicus—in progress. This change in attitude has taken longer to reach Valerius Flaccus than, for instance, Statius. And so Valerius is the last of the Flavian epic poets to receive a Companion.

The publication of a Companion to Valerius indicates that this poet has achieved the status of an accepted author; at the same time it will hopefully stimulate further interest and research. For this should help to break out of a vicious circle in which scholars do not work on certain topics or authors because no basic tools are available, and others do not provide these tools since nobody seems interested. Now that recent editions of the Latin text, new translations into several European languages and commentaries on the work as a whole as well as on almost all individual books are available, it seems timely to take stock, to provide an overview of what is central to Valerius and to explore further avenues of research.

Altogether the contributions in this Companion attempt to cover key aspects of Valerius’ *Argonautica* and of current research on the poem. They approach those from a range of angles and sometimes favour different conclusions; this illustrates the variety of potential approaches and the vibrancy of the field (summaries of all chapters can be found in the Abstracts section).

Part 1 starts from the basics, the establishment of the text; owing to the rather bad transmission and fairly recent re-evaluations of the relative

importance of the known manuscripts, this is a crucial part of Valerian studies. It then moves on to consider aspects of Valerius' language and style, including narrative structures with a metapoetical dimension. Part 2 identifies key themes, such as myth, philosophy and politics, and discusses them within the contemporary context. Part 3 looks at the characters in the epic; besides the protagonists Jason and Medea, the 'other Argonauts' are also considered. Part 4 is devoted to Valerius' Latin intertexts, i.e. earlier poems (mainly epics) to which his own work alludes implicitly or explicitly, as well as the contemporary Flavian epics of Statius and Silius Italicus, which seem to refer back to the *Argonautica*. While there is no separate section on Valerius' Greek intertexts, all chapters engage with the two most important of these, Homer's epics and Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, as their influence is relevant to almost all topics. Finally, Part 5 deals with the later reception of the *Argonautica* by studying one outstanding item, the conclusion of the epic written by Giovan Battista Pio in the early sixteenth century.

Outline of the Epic's Plot

Valerius' *Argonautica* recounts one version of the myth of Jason and his men, the Argonauts. As a basic familiarity with the story is assumed in most contributions, a brief summary of the myth and its treatment in Valerius is provided here.

Jason's tyrannical uncle Pelias, the king of Iolcus (in Thessaly), has been warned against a challenge to his position from his nephew and therefore seeks to destroy him. Hence he sends Jason to retrieve the Golden Fleece, which stems from the ram on which the Greek Phrixus, together with his sister Helle, fled to Colchis (on the Black Sea) and is now kept there in the grove of the god Mars. Accordingly, a group of heroes led by Jason travels from Iolcus to Colchis in the divine ship *Argo* and thus completes the first voyage across the open sea.

The Argonauts have to face a number of dangers during the voyage and later in Colchis: as a precondition for handing over the Golden Fleece, the local king Aetes asks Jason to confront fire-breathing bulls and earthborn men. With the support of the magical arts of Aetes' daughter Medea, who has fallen in love with him, Jason manages to complete these tasks successfully and to win the Golden Fleece.

Medea and Jason flee from Colchis, pursued by the Colchians. The Colchians are led by Medea's brother Absyrtus in some versions; in others Medea has taken her brother with her as a hostage. Jason and/or Medea kill Absyrtus and

thus are able to escape the pursuers. After some further adventures the Argo returns to Iolcus. Subsequently Medea and Jason have to move to Corinth, where Jason abandons Medea for his new bride Creusa, which provokes her revenge.

Before Valerius, this story had already been given various literary forms. The most detailed of the surviving ones is the narrative in Apollonius Rhodius' epic *Argonautica*, from the Hellenistic period, which presents the entire Argonautic enterprise, from the start of the journey until the return to Colchis, in four long books. It is generally agreed that this poem formed the basis for Valerius' plot, though he added and omitted scenes. Structurally, he most likely envisaged an epic of eight books (the extant text breaks off at 8.467), with a second proem in the middle (5.217–23) after the model of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the main exemplar in terms of narrative style, language and motifs.

Valerius' first book covers Pelias' instructions, Jason's reaction, the building of the Argo and the gathering of the crew with divine support, Jason's recruitment of Pelias' son Acastus, preparations for departure and the catalogue of the Argonauts, a divine scene, in which Jupiter outlines his 'plan of the world', the Argonauts' undergoing their first sea storm as the sea gods are enraged, Pelias' intention to kill Jason's parents back home, and their suicide in response.

From Book 2 until the beginning of Book 5, the actual journey is covered, punctuated by a number of stopovers: a stay at Lemnos (Book 2); a stop near Troy, where Hercules rescues the Trojan princess Hesione (Book 2); the appearance of Phrixus' sister Helle when the Argonauts cross the 'Hellespont' (Book 2); a stay on Cyzicus, where the Argonauts kill many of their former hosts in a tragic misunderstanding (Books 2–3); a 'rowing contest', during which Hercules breaks his oar (Book 3); a stop in Mysia, where Hercules loses his comrade Hylas owing to Juno's machinations and is left behind as the Argonauts sail on (Books 3–4); the confrontation with King Amycus in Bebrycia, where the Argonaut Pollux defeats him in a boxing match (Book 4); the crossing of the Bosphorus, where Orpheus tells the story of Io (Book 4); the visit to the blind seer Phineus, when the Argonauts Calais and Zetes chase away the Harpies tormenting the seer, who then reveals indications of the Argonauts' future (Book 4); the passage through the Symplegades, which brings the Argonauts into an entirely new world (Book 4); the visit to the Mariandyni, where they are hospitably received by King Lycus, but where the helmsman Tiphys and the seer Idmon die (Books 4–5); and the remainder of the voyage to Colchis with a series of brief incidents (Book 5).

After the second proem early in Book 5, the situation in Colchis is introduced in a flashback. When the story continues with the Argonauts' arrival, they meet the princess Medea, who directs them to the temple of Sol in the town. After

admiring the sanctuary, which is elaborately described, they encounter King Aeetes, who asks them to support him in his fight for power against his brother Perses and announces that he will then hand over the Golden Fleece; the book closes with a dinner, at which the Colchian fighters are presented, and a divine scene, where Jupiter indicates the future power relations in Colchis, but allows the other gods to act freely within this framework. Book 6 mainly consists of the description of the battle, partly seen through Medea's eyes, and her emerging love for Jason, which is kindled by Juno's intervention. The opening of Book 7 reveals that Aeetes is not handing over the Golden Fleece, but rather demands that Jason should fight the fire-breathing bulls and the earth-born men first. Juno redoubles her efforts on Medea and eventually gets her to assist Jason with her magical faculties. With the help of these and by means of his own strength Jason goes through the trials successfully. At the beginning of Book 8 Jason overcomes the dragon guarding the Golden Fleece with Medea's support, captures the Golden Fleece and sails off with the spoil and Medea. Her mother is devastated, and a contingent led by her brother Absyrtus sets off to pursue the Argonauts. The Colchians catch up with the Argo just as the wedding ceremony between Medea and Jason is being conducted. As a result of Juno's interference the Argonauts are able to ward off the Colchian pursuers, but they are no longer willing to take Medea with them. Jason is about to discuss this issue with Medea when the text breaks off.

Since nothing is known about Valerius' life except for what can be inferred from the epic itself (his only attested work) and Quintilian's comment, it is uncertain whether the poet died at this point or did not finish the epic for some other reason, or whether the ending of a once complete epic was lost in transmission. If the final part of the epic ever existed, it has left no traces. Quintilian's comment dates the poet's death to before c. 95 CE, and there are allusions to the conquest of Jerusalem in 70 CE in the proem (1.12–14) and to the eruption of the volcano Vesuvius in 79 CE in a simile (4.507–9). Beyond that there are no clear indications of the date of composition. Current consensus seems to be that the poem was probably started during the 70s CE and that it was either finished by 79 CE or that composition continued into the early 90s CE.

Scholarship on Valerius Flaccus

The first edition (*editio princeps*) of Valerius' *Argonautica* was published in Bologna in 1474, followed by a number of further editions until the middle of the sixteenth century. Despite this early interest, the poem was relatively

neglected by more modern scholarship in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, thanks to the general low regard for post-Virgilian, 'Silver', Latin literature. Whenever texts of this era were studied, the approach tended to be judgemental.

As a result of this limited interest, until relatively recently the only commentaries on the entire poem were the Latin works by Wagner (1805) and Langen (1896–7). Besides, apart from the Loeb edition by Mozley (1934), hardly any translations of the entire poem into a modern language were easily available. In the last decades of the twentieth century interest in Valerius returned. In 1970 a new Teubner edition of the *Argonautica* appeared (by Courtney) and a detailed study of the manuscripts by Ehlers, which revised earlier assumptions; this was followed by his Teubner edition in 1980.

Since the late 1990s editions and commentaries on Valerius have been produced in greater numbers: besides excerpts in anthologies, there is now a Budé edition with a revised text and French translation (by Liberman (1997, 2002)), another French edition (by Soubiran (2002)), a new English translation (by Barich (2009)), supplementing the Loeb edition by Mozley (1934), an Italian translation (by Caviglia (1999)), a German translation (by Dräger (2003)), two annotated translations into Spanish (by López Moreda (1996) and by Río Torres-Murciano (2011a)), a Portuguese version (by Gouvêa Júnior (2010)) and a Polish translation of the first half of Book 3 (by Śnieżewski (2003)). Spaltenstein (2002, 2004a, 2005) has completed a (French) commentary of the entire poem in three volumes, and other scholars have provided commentaries on individual books (or parts thereof): Book 1—Kleywegt (2005), Galli (2007), Zissos (2008); Book 2—Harper Smith (1987), Poortvliet (1991a); Book 4—Korn (1989), Campanini (1996), Murgatroyd (2009); Book 5—Wijsman (1996); Book 6—Fucecchi (1997, 2006), Wijsman (2000b), Baier (2001); Book 7—Taliercio (1992), Stadler (1993), Perutelli (1997); Book 8—Lazzarini (2012), Pellucchi (2012).

In the area of interpretation too the increasing interest in Valerius is shown in the rising number of publications. There were some important (mainly German) works on the *Argonautica* in the 1970s, in particular the study by Adamietz (1976) and the dissertation by Lüthje (1971), as well as articles by von Albrecht, Burck and later Lefèvre (1971–2012). Since the late 1980s/early 1990s the number of works (in English, German, Italian and, later, French) has increased; several published dissertations and collections of papers are now available (see especially the three volumes of *Ratis omnia vincet* (Korn and Tschiedel (1991), Eigler and Lefèvre (1998) and Spaltenstein (2004b)). Important works from this period covering more than Valerius are Denis Feeney's *The Gods in Epic* (1991) and Philip Hardie's *The Epic Successors of Virgil*

(1993). Further monographs in English on Flavian epic followed (e.g. McGuire (1997)), while the studies of Hershkowitz (1998b) and now Stover (2012a) are still the only monographs in English dedicated entirely to Valerius. From the 1990s onwards, Andrew Zissos studied important aspects that have furthered the literary appreciation of the epic in a series of articles; an overview of the state of the art (with bibliographical references) is provided in his commentary on Book 1 (Zissos 2008).

Bibliographical surveys on Valerius are provided by Ehlers (1971–2) for 1940–71 and Scaffai (1986b) for 1938–82, both annotated, by Cuypers (2012), offering a list with emphasis on recent works, and by Stover (2012b), in an annotated, selective overview.

PART 1

Text, Language and Poetic Techniques



Utere bono tuo feliciter: The Textual Transmission and Manuscript History of Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica

P. Ruth Taylor-Briggs

utere bono tuo feliciter: 'Use your Blessing Well'

'Valerian studies seem in danger of falling prey to the worship of manuscripts—a particular vice for such a poorly transmitted poem.' So judged Leofranc Holford-Strevens¹ with reference to a perverse imbalance in twentieth-century Valerian scholarship, whereby textual critics spilt considerable ink evaluating the manuscript tradition of a text which few literary critics deigned to appreciate, dismissively expressing a 'fashionable disdain'² for the poet's artistic merits. Textual criticism, however, exists to serve the needs of literary criticism, to provide better access to the poet's voice. The *Argonautica*, moreover, is by no means as poorly transmitted as was long assumed and the effort expended by textual critics since 1970 has radically revised our understanding of the authority of the various manuscripts, preparing the ground well for a recent revival of critical interest. We will do well, therefore, to heed the injunction made by one of the earliest scholars to leave his mark on the text, who, in apparent imitation of Cicero (*Nat. D.* 1.103)—

utatur enim suis bonis oportet . . . qui beatus futurus est

for he who is to be happy should use his blessings . . .

—concludes his *incipit* to the fifth book *utere bono tuo feliciter*, 'Use your blessing well!'³

¹ As quoted by Zissos (2008) v.

² Zissos (2006b) 182.

³ This *incipit* is present in V with traces just visible in L (Ehlers (1970) 11) and must descend at the latest from their shared ancestor, γ, for which see below, pp. 14–15.

vetustissimi: *The Oldest Manuscripts*

Until Courtney's edition of 1970,⁴ editors of Valerius' *Argonautica* routinely relied on one single complete manuscript as the main basis of their text. Vaticanus Latinus 3277, known universally by the *siglum* V, is the oldest extant witness to the Valerian tradition and for that reason must be independent of all the other manuscripts extant today. Written on 140 *folia* of parchment, each containing nineteen to twenty-three lines a page, it was copied in the insular monastery of Fulda⁵ in the second quarter/middle of the ninth century by several scribes, whose lack of mastery of its Carolingian minuscule script suggests that they were pupils.⁶ Modern scholars assume that V is the *codex . . . reverendae et exosculandae vetustatis ex Germania allatus* ('manuscript of venerable and highly admirable antiquity brought from Germany') lent in the early sixteenth century by Jacobus Orodryinus to Johannes Baptista Pius and used by the latter for his Bolognese edition of 1519.⁷ Indisputably, at 3.538 V exhibits the error *pecula*, with a superscript *r*, matching exactly Pius' description of this exemplar:

mox ab eadem manu superscriptum .r. ut exeat in percula.

Soon by the same hand an *r* has been placed above the line so that it becomes *percula*.

At 3.703, however, Pius writes:

codicis antiqui litterae sunt adeo vetustatis vitio exollescentes ut percipi non possint.

The letters of my ancient manuscript are so faded by the corruption of age that they cannot be discerned.

The text in V at this point could not be clearer, likewise at 6.30 and 7.246, in both of which places Pius describes his ancient exemplar as *litteris fere*

⁴ Courtney (1970).

⁵ Lehmann (1960) 180.

⁶ Bischoff in Ehlers (1970) 19. For further information on V, see Kramer (1913) vi–xxxi; Courtney (1970) x–xiv.

⁷ Ehlers (1970) 19, 105; Liberman (1997) lxxiii.

exolescentibus ('with letters [which are] generally faded').⁸ Manuscripts deteriorate with age, but do not improve. I suspect, therefore, that Pius used not V itself, but the *immediate exemplar* of V, now known as α , which the uneducated pupil-scribes at Fulda had reproduced mechanically, letter by letter, stroke by stroke, erring only by carelessness or when confused by palaeographical form;⁹ in the ninth century their exemplar was legible, but by the sixteenth century, age and decay had rendered some lines illegible. One major error in V, the reduplication of fifty lines, 2.213–62, indicates that this exemplar, α , exhibited twenty-five lines to a page.¹⁰

Also respected by early editors were the manuscripts copied from the Sangallensis, so called since it was discovered in 1416 by Poggio Bracciolini and two other humanistic scholars, Cencio Rustici and Bartolomeo da Montepulciano, at the monastery of St Gall, another insular foundation just south of Lake Constance in modern-day Switzerland. Unfortunately, this manuscript, now known by the *siglum* S, was immediately lost after the six surviving *apographa* were made, Poggio's own autograph copy, Matritensis Bibl. Nat. 8514 (X), Vaticanus Latinus 1613 (P), Vaticanus Ottobonianus 1258 (O), Oxoniensis Regimensis 314 (Q), Malatestianus Caesenas S xiiXII 3 (Mal) and Vaticanus Latinus 1614 (II).¹¹ Each, characterised by the spelling of the poet's

8 Pius' citation of sources is inconsistent in vocabulary and indiscriminate in number (singular/plural). However, as Ehlers ((1970) 105) points out, he probably only had one ancient manuscript. He refers to this with phrases such as *venerandos* (6.30), *maiestate vetusta suspiciendi* (6.50), *exosculatus antiquitatem* (7.246). The survival of V is anything but proof that Pius used V: the use of ancient manuscripts during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is more closely associated with their subsequent loss instead. Cf. the fates of S, γ and C below. Identification of V with Pius' ancient manuscript is based largely on a single reading, the presence *in rasura* of *evenietque* at 1.178 (Kramer (1913) xii). However, this reading has been added to V by a late fifteenth-/early sixteenth-century second hand and may therefore post-date 1519, the year of Pius' edition. If so, it may result from collation with Pius' edition, just as other additions *in rasura* by this hand up to f. 6 result from collation with *recentiores* (Kramer (1913) xiii).

9 For similar slavish, mechanical copying by unlearned scribes in ninth-century monasteries, see Taylor (1993) 242–3. Kramer ((1913) xiv) believed that a scribe copied from his exemplar after the subscription on f. 140^r the name of an earlier scribe, not realising that it was a name and therefore adding a dot between the first two syllables, *uul.fered*. Labardi ((1983) 202) also observed that some of the scribes of V copied out critical signs exactly as they appeared in the exemplar.

10 Schmidt ((1976) 246) argues convincingly that α copied the pagination of its own exemplar (his ω , now γ , for which see below, pp. 14–15). 2.213–62 probably occupied f. 22^v and f. 23^r in this exemplar, according to Ehlers' reconstruction, Schmidt (1976) 249–50.

11 For further information and evaluation see Getty (1934); Ehlers (1970) 24–31.

name as *GAGI* rather than *CAI* and by the omission of the fifty lines 1.393–442 (again implying an exemplar of twenty-five lines to a page) and of the single line 2.240, is most instantly recognisable from the curtailment of the text at line 4.317. It is no coincidence that both S and V are transcribed from an exemplar exhibiting twenty five lines to a page: both in fact also share errors in common against the rest of the tradition and each is free of certain errors exhibited by the other,¹² allowing the logical conclusion that both, independently of each other, are direct descendants of the same exemplar, α . The curtailment of the text at 4.317 seems to result from the mutilation of S itself before the fifteenth-century copies were made: Poggio describes the squalid state in which he found the manuscripts at St Gall:

pulvere tineis fulgine ceterisque rebus ad oblitterationem librorum
pertinentibus obsoletam pollutamque

worn out and defiled by dust, worms, soot and other things conducive to
the destruction of books,

kept not in the library itself but

in teterrimo quodam et obscuro carcere, fundo scilicet unius turris, quo
ne capitalis quidem rei damnati retruderentur

in a really foul and obscure prison, to be precise, at the bottom of a turret,
where not even men convicted of a capital offence would be shoved away.

The fifty lines omitted from S probably occupied f. 9^r and 9^v in α ,¹³ suggesting that this *folio* had been misplaced or lost from α *after* it was used by the scribes of V but *before* it served as an exemplar for S. Therefore, S post-dates V.¹⁴ A later date for S is also corroborated by the absence of any manuscript containing Valerius Flaccus from the ninth-century catalogues of the library at St Gall, detailing books added to the library before 872.¹⁵

¹² Taylor (1987) 30–2.

¹³ Ehlers in Schmidt (1976) 246, 249–50. For the pagination of α and the mutilation of S, see Ullman (1931) 27–9.

¹⁴ Schmidt (1976) 247.

¹⁵ Becker (1885) 32–5, 43–56.

recentiores, non deteriores

In 1970 Ehlers, in a perfect demonstration of the principle *recentiores, non deteriores*, ('more recent manuscripts are not [necessarily] inferior'),¹⁶ revealed that five lines present in the early fifteenth-century manuscript Laurentianus plut. 39.38 (L) but absent from V and S were authentically Valerian, thus proving the independence of L from V, S and α .¹⁷ Cambier had already identified the scribe of L as the Florentine scholar Niccolò Niccoli (1364–1437).¹⁸ The independent status of Niccoli's manuscript within the extant manuscript tradition was then further corroborated by the discovery in 1972 of *Miscellaneorum Centuria Secunda*,¹⁹ in the second chapter of which the Italian scholar/author Politian (d. 1494) declared that he had recognised the hand of Niccolò Niccoli in the margins of an ancient manuscript of Valerius²⁰ exhibiting twenty-five lines to a page; one *folio* of this manuscript was incorrectly bound, causing the displacement of fifty lines, 8.136–85, by 200 lines to appear a further four *folia* later after 8.385, corresponding to the same dislocation of text witnessed in all full-length manuscripts then known to him.²¹ Here then was further proof that Niccolò Niccoli had used as his exemplar not V, exhibiting 19–23 lines per page, but another ancient manuscript, now known as γ , which, like α , exhibited twenty-five lines to a page.²² This recognition of L's independent status now gives readings of L equal authority to those of V and S (α), allowing a more accurate and authentic reconstruction of the text, particularly given the many textual corruptions from which L is free but by which V and S (α) are marred.²³ Niccoli's manuscript, L, is the source, directly or indirectly, of more than thirty *recentiores* created throughout the course of the fifteenth century.²⁴

16 For this principle see Pasquali (1952) 43–108; Maas (1958) 52; West (1973) 50.

17 Ehlers (1970) 47–66.

18 Cambier (1965) 239.

19 Published by Branca and Stocchi (1972).

20 Lent to him by Taddeus Ugoletus of Parma (see *Miscellaneorum Centuria* 5).

21 This applies also to V despite the loss of a further two *folia* in this manuscript.

22 Schmidt (1976) 244 also identified further proof that Politian's ancient manuscript could not have been V in that it read *durica* at 2.572, with L but against V, which reads *turica*.

23 Ehlers (1970) 68–79.

24 For these *recentiores*, see Ehlers (1970) 83–6, 88–101.

The Hyparchetype γ

Various errors in L stemming from a misreading of insular minuscule suggest a date for γ in either the seventh or eighth century.²⁵ Almost certainly γ was very difficult to read, for despite its survival at least until the end of the fifteenth century, it does not seem to have been used again as an exemplar or to have been used as a contaminating source of collation in any other extant manuscript.²⁶ It was Niccolò Niccoli's normal practice, moreover, *only* to make copies himself when an exemplar was 'ancient and hard to read', before passing on that autograph copy to his regular copyists.²⁷ In the case of Valerius Flaccus, Antonio di Mario, a scribe routinely in Niccoli's employ, went on to copy Laurentianus plut. 39.35 (D) from Niccoli's autograph copy in 1429.

γ probably came from the North-Italian monastery of Bobbio,²⁸ where manuscripts have long been notorious for their illegibility: the 1461 catalogue frequently feels the need to distinguish between books which are *in littera legibili* ('in legible script') and those *in littera longobardo difficili ad legendum* ('in [insular minuscule] difficult to read').²⁹ Listed as item 477 in a mid to late ninth-century catalogue is the entry *Valerii Flacci liber I*.³⁰ The location of this entry within the catalogue suggests its acquisition or creation in the 'pre-Dungal' period, namely before c. 825.³¹ The indifference shown towards classical Latin authors at Bobbio during the seventh and the early-eighth centuries, with classical pagan texts seeming to serve little purpose other than as the raw material for palimpsesting,³² refines the probable date of the Valerian manuscript to the late eighth century. It is an interesting coincidence that Niccolò Niccoli passed his transcription of γ to Antonio di Mario to make a copy for

25 Labardi (1983) 199.

26 Liberman (1997) lxxxi. Bartolomeo della Fonte frequently cites a *vetustus codex* in the margins of his own copy of the first printed edition (*B-1474*), now Biblioteca Riccardiana Ed.R.431. These annotations have now been published by Thurn (2009). Della Fonte's *vetustus codex* was not γ, α or V, given its variance from these manuscripts at the following places: 1.63 *liuentia** (libentia LV); 1.337 *sinantem* (*sin autem* LV); 2.103 *tereti** (reti α); 2.130 *fringis* (*fringis* α); 2.318 *patris* (om. α); 2.343 *stat** (*instat* L; *istat* V); 2.411 *pressit acu** (*pressit ac* L; *praesit a* α).

27 De la Mare (1973) 48.

28 Cf. Schmidt (1976) 251.

29 Peyron (1824) *passim*.

30 Becker (1885) 70. This manuscript is not present in the 1461 catalogue.

31 Richter (2008) 141–2.

32 Richter (2008) 151–4.

his patron Cosimo de' Medici in c. 1429,³³ in the same year that the abbot of Bobbio was Leonardo de' Medici.³⁴ It is tempting to speculate that Cosimo, an avid manuscript-collector, accessed γ by taking advantage of a family relationship to pull a few strings.

The Northern French/Belgian Branch of the Tradition

Twelve manuscripts dating from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, each including up to twenty-seven extracts from the *Argonautica*,³⁵ belong to a corpus known today as the *Florilegium Gallicum*, a collection of mostly short and sententious³⁶ excerpts from classical authors,³⁷ originally compiled as a teaching tool in the twelfth century³⁸ in Northern France.³⁹ Attempts to attribute the corpus more specifically to one of the richly endowed monastic libraries within this region, including Corbie,⁴⁰ Orléans⁴¹ and Lobbes,⁴² remain speculative, with Birger Munk Olsen sensibly noting the very real possibility that the compiler used more than one library or drew on a pre-existing compilation now lost.⁴³ There is considerable overlap in the choice of excerpts taken from the *Argonautica*,⁴⁴ which are also characterised by a dislocation in the ordering of excerpt 1.39 by the eight manuscripts that include it, contrary to the normal practice in the *Florilegium Gallicum* of presenting the extracts from each

33 De la Mare (1973) 48.

34 Cipolla (1918) 34. The relationship of Leonardo to Cosimo is unclear.

35 For these manuscripts see Ullman (1931) 21–3 (including collation); Munk Olsen (1979) 77–82; Burton (1983) 46–9, 52–3, 57–60, 74–7, 79–87, 172–9 (including collation); Liberman (1997) XC–XCI.

36 Ullman (1928) 128; Munk Olsen (1979) 76; Burton (1983) 27.

37 For a full list of the classical authors included, see Burton (1983) 13–15.

38 Burton (1983) 31.

39 Munk Olsen (1979) 76. The *Florilegium Gallicum* is representative of a widespread practice of compiling excerpts from classical authors in twelfth-century France; see Burton (1983) 8–10.

40 Gagnér (1936) 109.

41 Rouse and Rouse (1978) 354, followed by Burton (1983) 10.

42 Munk Olsen (1979) 77.

43 Munk Olsen (1979) 76–7. See Ullman's evidence ((1932) 22–4) for the dependence of the Martial extracts in the *Florilegium Gallicum* on a pre-existing compilation. For further discussion on this topic, see Hamacher (1975) 106–7.

44 Two manuscripts, d and t, include one excerpt (8.408–9) absent from all others, suggesting early sub-division within the family, but not precluding common ancestry, despite Ehlers' opinion to the contrary ((1970) 111).

work in the order of the text.⁴⁵ This error reflects the state of their common ancestor, referred to as f.⁴⁶

In 1931, Ullman used corruptions in the extant tradition to assert the textual independence of f from all other extant manuscripts.⁴⁷ Consider, for example, the following (where an asterisk indicates the correct reading):

1.327	ei mihi* B-1474 ⁴⁸ : amipli γ : heu mihi f
1.330	raucos* f : paucos γ
1.331	polumque* f : cretamque γ
1.587	Aeolus* f : aebulus γ

It is highly improbable, particularly in the cases of 1.327 and 1.331, that a twelfth-century scholar could have hazarded such reasonable conjectures from such extreme corruptions.⁴⁹

Although transmitting a very small proportion of the full text and preserving only a handful of good readings against corruptions in γ,⁵⁰ the main value of f lies in its proof that there existed in Northern France a branch of the tradition independent from that represented by γ and its descendants. Any further value is limited by the textual remodelling to which the excerpts were submitted in order to render them free-standing and/or to add piquancy to the expression of some moral.⁵¹

Further evidence pointing towards the existence of a separate, mediaeval, branch of the tradition in the region of or neighbouring Northern France came to light in 1978 with the discovery by François Dolbeau of a catalogue from the Belgian monastery of Lobbes, dating to 1049–1160 and including the entry *Gaii Valerii Flacci Sethini Balbi argonauticon lib. VIII. Vol. I*.⁵² Subsequently, in 1986, Frank Coulson further revealed that the scholar responsible for the ‘Vulgate’ commentary on Ovid, composed in the mid thirteenth century at Orléans, cited two passages from Valerius Flaccus (1.184–6 and 4.431 *spes*–432) notably

45 Munk Olsen (1979) 76 and Burton (1983) 9.

46 Liberman’s objection to the use of this dislocation as evidence of textual relationship ((1990) 140 *note additionelle*) places excessive reliance on unconvincing reconstructions of pagination.

47 Ullman (1931) 26. I have updated the readings to include L and γ as the agreement of LV.

48 The earliest printed edition of Valerius Flaccus, printed in Bologna in 1474.

49 See also Courtney (1970) xxx–xxxi.

50 Ullman (1931) 26.

51 Ullman (1928) 129 and (1931) 24; Munk Olsen (1979) 52–3; Burton (1983) 20.

52 Dolbeau (1978) 33, (1979) 227–8.

absent from the *florilegia*.⁵³ The *florilegia*, therefore, cannot be the source of these quotations. Furthermore, in 1987, Smits noticed that another Valerian line absent from the *florilegia*, 7.192, seemed to have inspired the twelfth-century scholar supplementing Curtius Rufus' *Historia Alexandri*.⁵⁴

This growing body of evidence for the existence of a mediaeval Valerian tradition in the region of Northern France and Belgium considerably enhanced the credibility of a long-disputed claim made in two editions of the *Argonautica* published at Antwerp in 1565 and 1566 by the Belgian scholar Ludovicus Carrio (1547–95). Carrio claimed that he had discovered in an unspecified location in Belgium a manuscript of *Argonautica* 1.1–8.105 *ante sexcentos annos conscriptum* ('written 600 years ago'), as confirmed, he declared in the preface to his first edition, by *gravissima multorum iudicia* ('the highly authoritative judgements of many individuals'). In the absence of any reference to the identity of these individuals or any other further independent assessment of his manuscript before it was lost, Carrio's claim to have possessed a mediaeval manuscript was accepted by only a minority of scholars,⁵⁵ with the vast majority judging that through juvenile error or a deliberate desire to deceive, Carrio attributed to the tenth century a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century descendant of the branch now known as γ, transcribed by a semi-learned scholar who with *infrenata coniectandi libido*⁵⁶ ('an unbridled passion for conjecture') and with the aid of various manuscripts and early editions 'corrected' the text.⁵⁷ Carrio's collation of this manuscript, as reported in the *scholia* and *castigationes* ('notes') accompanying his first and second editions respectively, is known by the *siglum* C.⁵⁸

In 1990, Munk Olsen made the dramatic discovery that a single parchment *folio* of an early twelfth-century manuscript,⁵⁹ now the fly-leaf for a sixteenth-century liturgical text, Douai Bibl. Mun. 70, from the Abbey of Marchiennes in Northern France close to the Belgian border, contained precisely the same

53 Coulson (1986) 58–60.

54 Smits (1987) 91, 94, 119.

55 Heinsius and Eyssenhardt in Thilo (1863) lxx; Giarratano (1904) xxxiv; Schmidt (1974) 263; Taylor (1989) 451–71.

56 Thilo (1863) lxxvii.

57 For example, Thilo (1863) lxx–xxxv; Schenkl (1871) 317–20; Krenkel (1909); Kramer (1913) xlvi–lxxxiv; Courtney (1970) xxvi–xxviii; Ehlers (1980) x–xi.

58 Carrio explains in the preface to his *castigationes* that the inaccuracy of the first edition prompted the publication of the second just one year later. In Taylor (1989) 462, I have illustrated that the pattern of divergence in references to C from the 1565 to the 1566 edition routinely moves towards agreement with γ, confirming the sincerity of this excuse. See also Kramer (1913) lii–liii.

59 Pierre Petitmengin and Munk Olsen in Liberman (1990) 127 n. 1.

sixty lines of the *Argonautica* as those with which Carrio claimed his own manuscript had finished, namely 8.46–105.⁶⁰ When collating this twelfth-century fragment with the readings of C Liberman discovered an almost total convergence.⁶¹ He also noted striking coincidences in the punctuation and second hands observed by Carrio in C and the same now witnessed in the surviving Douai fragment.⁶² Both Ehlers⁶³ and Liberman⁶⁴ therefore rightly concluded that this fragment is none other than the last *folio* of Carrio's manuscript.⁶⁵ Since Carrio's scholarship elsewhere reveals him to be rather specific in his opinions concerning the date of old manuscripts,⁶⁶ I have abandoned my earlier belief that Carrio used *sexcentos* in describing the age of his manuscript in the common figurative sense of 'hundreds', an indeterminate but emphatically large number,⁶⁷ and now defer to Liberman in accepting that the young Carrio, at the age of eighteen, had too little palaeographical experience to date his manuscript with sufficient accuracy, judging it to be tenth- rather than twelfth-century in error.⁶⁸ Carrio's youthful passion for hunting out and/or collating old manuscripts is well documented in other manuscript traditions: during his student days at Cologne in 1564 and thus before he was seventeen, he collated an eighth-century manuscript of Censorinus at the instigation of his teacher, Hittorpius,⁶⁹ and subsequently in the same city a Charisius (of unknown date)⁷⁰ and a Carolingian manuscript of Silius Italicus;⁷¹ before he was twenty-two in

60 For a reproduction of this *folio*, see Liberman (1990) 130–1. Ehlers (1991) 29 and Hurka (2003) 18 refer to this fragment by the *siglum* Δ, whereas Liberman abandons his initial practice of using the *siglum* Du ((1990) 128) in favour of citing it as 'le fragment de C' ((1993) 291).

61 See Liberman (1990) 134–5 and also Ehlers (1991) 30.

62 Liberman (1990) 128.

63 Ehlers (1991) 31.

64 Liberman (1990) 128.

65 Hurka's objection ((2003) 19–22) that the Douai fragment cannot be C as one of the readings reported by Carrio is indecipherable overlooks the inevitable physical deterioration that the manuscript would have suffered subsequent to its use by Carrio, given the use to which the *folio* was later put.

66 Carrio judged a manuscript of Aulus Gellius to be 'four hundred years old' (Marshall (1983) 180), and one of Censorinus as *Caroli Magni tempore scriptum*, 'written in the time of Charlemagne' (Sallmann (1983) ix).

67 Taylor (1989) 453 n. 15.

68 Liberman (1997) lxxxii.

69 Cologne Lat. 166, for which see Sallmann (1983) viii–ix. Sallmann's attribution of this manuscript to the seventh century seems to be a typographical error.

70 Rouse (1983) 52.

71 Reeve (1983) 391.

1569, he had discovered an early eleventh-century manuscript of Manilius in Gembloux in Belgium.⁷² Therefore, Carrio's declaration in the preface to the *castigationes* of his second edition, *quos [libros manuscriptos] certe in toto hoc nostro Belgio, praeter illum meum, reperire adhuc potui nullos* ('none of which [manuscripts], indeed, I have up until now been able to find, apart from that one of mine in all of this, our Belgium'), lends the weight of probability to an identification of C with that listed in the aforementioned eleventh/twelfth-century catalogue of the library at the Belgian monastery of Lobbes.⁷³

The Value of C: Accuracy of Collation

With only a tiny fragment of Carrio's manuscript extant today we are reliant on Carrio's scholarship for access to the rest. A substantial body of evidence already exists to illuminate the methodology and standard of his scholarship: Blass examined Carrio's published work on Censorinus against the extant Cologne manuscript;⁷⁴ I myself have examined Carrio's autograph collation of the Manilius *Gemblacensis*, present in the margins of a 1566 *Lugdunensis* edition⁷⁵ and reported in his *Antiquarum Lectionum Commentarii* (Antwerp, 1576);⁷⁶ Liberman has analysed the Douai fragment against the notes in

72 Now Brux. Bibl. Roy. 10012. Geuartius (1593–1666), owner of a 1566 *Lugdunensis* printed edition of Manilius, now Bodl. Linc. 8° F 107, onto which Carrio added his collation of this *Gemblacensis*, writes that the *Gemblacensis* once exhibited the note *Hunc librum D. Iacobus Susius utendum recepit (?) Mechlinię a D. Ludovico Carrione, I.C. An. 1569*.

73 Ehlers (1991) 31.

74 Blass in Pasquali (1952) 70–1. Carrio's edition of Censorinus was published in Paris in 1583.

75 See above n. 72.

76 Taylor (1989) 454–8. Liberman (1990) 141 dismisses the relevance of this collation on account of the youthfulness of Carrio when publishing his first edition of the *Argonautica* in 1565. However, Carrio's collation of Manilius must have been undertaken very soon afterwards between 1566, the date of the edition against which it was collated, and 1569, when Carrio gave the *Gemblacensis* to Susius (see n. 72). Hurka (2003) 17 dismisses the relevance of Carrio's work on Manilius on different grounds, as unrepresentative, for in his view the accuracy of a simple marginal collation is no measure of how accurately a collation would be subsequently reported in an edition. Hurka however overlooks the fact that Carrio does go on to cite these collated readings of Manilius in his *Antiquarum Lectionum Commentarii*. Hurka's objection can also be overruled in essence, moreover, for, as Pasquali ((1952) 69) has pointed out, it is the care (or lack of it) in adding a collation to the margins of a printed edition that constitutes the major risk factor in the accurate transmission of variants in subsequent publications.

Carrio's two editions of the *Argonautica*.⁷⁷ The consensus of these three separate investigations is that there is an impressive level of accuracy.⁷⁸ Blass even goes as far as to say that *il Carrion non si sbaglia mai* ('Carrio never makes a mistake') in distinguishing readings of his manuscript from personal conjectures.⁷⁹ An important *caveat*, however, must be added: Carrio, in common with other sixteenth-century scholars, did not aim to be comprehensive or systematic in his reporting of the variants in his manuscript;⁸⁰ moreover, there is frequently ambiguity in the phraseology and punctuation of both his comments and *lemmata*, such as is typical of scholarship of the period.⁸¹ The uncertainties inevitable at times as a result of these characteristics lead me to follow Blass' scepticism regarding the wisdom of extrapolating the reading of Carrio's manuscript *ex silentio* from the reading printed in his text:⁸² there is no reason to doubt Carrio's *bona fides*, but due caution must be exercised in identifying his intention in references to (or silence concerning) his *vetus codex*.

The Value of C: Stemmatic Status—C and γ

The readings of C, as collated and reported by Carrio, have been submitted to considerable scrutiny. Various indicators give positive evidence of the independence of C from the γ -branch of the tradition. Particularly significant are errors in C, which, being nonsensical, can hardly be the product of conjecture, but which are significantly closer to the correct reading (marked *) than the errors exhibited by γ :

5.484	sorte* : forte C : oste γ
6.69	Sydon iaces-* : Fidon iaces- C : sydonya caes- γ

In these examples, the palaeographical shape of the readings of C is too close to the correct reading to be attributed to the coincidental by-product of a nonsensical conjecture. C's readings must, therefore, be either accurate representations or corruptions of a form of the word(s) that pre-dates the

77 Liberman (1993) 293–4.

78 Taylor (1989) 454–7.

79 Blass in Pasquali (1952) 71.

80 Blass in Pasquali (1952) 70; Liberman (1993) 294.

81 Blass in Pasquali (1952) 71; Liberman (1997) lxxxvii–lxxxviii.

82 Blass in Pasquali (1952) 70. Cf. Liberman (1993) 294–5 and (1997) lxxxv–lxxxvi.

exemplar of the extant manuscript tradition, namely γ .⁸³ Further evidence of the independence of C from the γ -branch of the tradition lies in the presence of numerous correct readings which neither a mediaeval nor a Renaissance scribe/scholar would have been capable of reaching by conjecture,⁸⁴ the presence of words and lines omitted by γ (e.g. lines 4.196⁸⁵ and 7.633⁸⁶) and the freedom of C from some of the transpositions which mar γ .⁸⁷ Even in the days when prejudice against Carrio and his manuscript routinely encouraged scepticism, C was considered the sole source of the correct reading against the rest of the tradition at least forty times,⁸⁸ a number which would have risen to approximately 130 if correct readings of C pre-empted by the Renaissance scribes of the *recentiores* and the early printed editions were included. These numbers will now need revising upwards in view of fresh scholarship free from such long-standing prejudice: Wijsman,⁸⁹ for example, rightly supports the readings of C at 5.75 (*Callirhoen*); 5.239 (*quaecumque*); 6.186 (*egerit*); 6.230 (*proturbans*); 6.247 (*liquuntur*); 6.300 (*agmina quem quaerit nusquam*); 6.305 (*inquit genitor*); 6.441 (*ad fremitus*); 6.571 (*praereptus*); 6.572 (*Zeten*). Liberman, Kleywegt and Zissos⁹⁰ accept C at 1.704 (*ora*) and at 1.827 (*abscissa*). Murgatroyd⁹¹ provides excellent analysis of the merits of C at 4.196 (*taurus . . . tumentem*) and 4.724 (*invenit*).⁹²

No description of C, however, can be considered representative without acknowledging the very clear evidence of interpolation present, betrayed by a certain crudity and naïveté in scholarship: for example,

83 It is evidence of this particular nature which most emphatically refutes Hurka's continued adherence ((2003) 124) to the outdated belief that C is no more than a descendent of γ which was the victim of an intensive revision of varying quality and that most of the peculiar readings of C are attributable to the intervention of one or more second hands ((2003) 22).

84 Taylor (1989) 468; Liberman (1990) 132–3.

85 See Murgatroyd (2009) 117.

86 Taylor (1989) 467. See Wijsman (2000b) 221.

87 Taylor (1989) 467; Liberman (1997) lxxxix.

88 Taylor (1989) 470–1.

89 Wijsman (1996) and (2000b) *ad loc.*

90 Liberman (1997), Kleywegt (2005) and Zissos (2008) *ad loc.*

91 Murgatroyd (2009) *ad loc.*

92 It is all too easy, however, for the pendulum to swing too far in the opposite direction: Wijsman (2000b), for example, is too keen to give C 'full weight' *ad* 6.129; 6.208; 6.417; 6.537; 6.538; 6.554; 6.638.

1.141	racia γ : extracta C : Atracia*
2.283	furtis γ : bustis C : furiis*
3.566	stridore* γ : de trude C ⁹³

These ‘corrections’ may be attributable to the ‘second hands’ observed by Carrio in his manuscript⁹⁴ or to the scribe of C *inter scribendum* (‘in the process of writing/copying’) or to an ancestor of C or to a combination of these possibilities.⁹⁵

The Value of C: Stemmatic Status—C and f

C and f share not only a common geographical origin but, significantly, also certain correct readings against severe corruptions in γ :⁹⁶

1.331	cretamque γ : polumque* Cf ⁹⁷
7.229	rediitque γ : redit itque* Cf

C and f, therefore, represent a branch of the tradition independent from γ . The precise nature of their interrelationship will probably remain shrouded in mystery not only because of the textual remodelling to which f was submitted and the meagre number of lines preserved but also because of our limited access to C and our dependence on the readings which Carrio naturally selected for their apparent value in preference to severe, but more indicative, corruptions. The presence in two of the f-*apographa*⁹⁸ of an excerpt, 8.408–9 *ut . . . amor*, taken from a point in the text after C is mutilated, may suggest that f descends from an ancestor of C but does not preclude the possibility that f

93 Taylor (1989) 470. See also Liberman (1997) xcvi.

94 Taylor (1989) 467 n. 55. There is insufficient evidence to assess how consistent Carrio was in attributing interlinear, marginal or *in rasura* additions to a second hand. Liberman (1997) lxxxix judges that Carrio informs the reader *des interventions importantes* (‘of important interventions’). Hurka’s belief ((2003) 22) that most of the readings peculiar to C are attributable to the intervention of one or more second hands is incompatible with the evidence of the Douai fragment.

95 See below, pp. 24–6.

96 Ullman (1931) 29–30.

97 Kleywegt’s failure ((2005) 191) to understand a reason for γ ’s error should not in itself constitute a reason to dispute the authenticity of Cf’s reading.

98 Berlin Deutsche Staatsbibliothek Diez B. Sant 60, fourteenth century, and Troyes, Bibl. Municipale 2013, fifteenth century.

descends from C itself at a time prior to the mutilation.⁹⁹ Alternatively, the inclusion of 8.408–9 in these two *apographa* may be attributable to contamination in a hyparchetype within the family of the *florilegia*.¹⁰⁰

The Nature of the Archetype of the Tradition

The agreement of C, f and γ, where evidence exists, offers an insight into the archetype of the tradition, namely ω. Errors in the division of words exhibited *separately* by γ and C have led scholars to speculate that the archetype was written in *scriptura continua* ('writing without word division'),¹⁰¹ suggesting the end of the second century as a *terminus post quem*: before this time 'interpunction' (dots between words) generally indicated word division.¹⁰² A *terminus ante quem* exists in the date of its earliest known copy, γ, probably late in the eighth century;¹⁰³ word-division becomes standard practice during the course of the seventh century.¹⁰⁴

Lieberman's speculation that the archetype exhibited twenty lines per page¹⁰⁵ requires a frequent assumption of lines placed in the margins,¹⁰⁶ the (highly improbable) omission of *incipits* and *explicits*¹⁰⁷ and the placement of just two lines on f. 1r, as though the *Argonautica* were a high-status manuscript akin to the *Aeneid*, opening with virtually full-page decoration. It is thus no more credible than his corollary hypothesis that an immediate ancestor of the archetype exhibited eighteen lines per page,¹⁰⁸ requiring, in complete contrast, five or six lines per *incipit* or *explicit*. As Ullman observed, '[a]ttempts to reconstruct the paging of a lost archetype are notoriously hazardous',¹⁰⁹ and this twofold model of pagination is certainly not a convincing method by which to

99 Ehlers (1985), 341 n. 37; Taylor (1989) 468 n. 60; Liberman (1997) xcii.

100 Cf. Burton's stemma, (1983) 124. Berlin Deutsche Staatsbibliothek Diez B. Sant. 6o is b in Burton's stemma (d in Ehlers (1980) xiv and Liberman (1997) xc).

101 Labardi (1983) 197; Liberman (1997) xcix.

102 Bischoff (1990) 173.

103 See above, p. 14.

104 Parkes (1991) 3–4.

105 Liberman (1993) 299–300.

106 For example, 1.403–10, at least one or two between 3.26 and 5.405, etc.

107 For example, in the section 3.26–5.405. Cf. Cavallo (1999) 87.

108 Liberman (1993) 301–2.

109 Ullman (1931) 27. However, Ehlers' reconstruction of the pagination of γ (his ω), as presented by Schmidt (1976) 249–50, is founded on substantial evidence in the various *apographa*, including large-scale omissions, and is rightly respected.

suggest that 8.467, the point at which the *Argonautica* ends, once coincided with the bottom of a *folio (recto)* and that the curtailment of the text resulted from the illegibility of the last *folio verso* and accidental mutilation.¹¹⁰ Much more plausible is the alternative and widely accepted theory that Quintilian's comment, *multum in Valerio Flacco nuper amisimus* ('we have recently lost much in Valerius Flaccus', *Inst.* 10.1.90), refers to the poet's premature death leaving the *Argonautica* unfinished.¹¹¹

Scholastic Activity in the Tradition

The antiquity of a manuscript is anything but a guarantee of textual purity. There is ample evidence that scholars of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages directed their activity into the 'correction' of texts.¹¹² Liberman interprets a small number of errors in the extant tradition as evidence of correction in the archetype.¹¹³ The weight of evidence for correction in the history of the tradition, however, lies in Labardi's observation of a correspondence in the placement of two types of critical signs, 'R' and *obeloi*, in the margins of V and L. Sometimes these critical signs occur where textual corruption no longer exists, suggesting that correction had been carried out subsequent to the addition of the signs.¹¹⁴ As the use of these particular critical signs is typical of the work of insular scholars in the ninth century,¹¹⁵ it seems probable that both the signs and the associated corrections belong to a stage in the tradition which post-dates ω but is common to both V and L, hence is identifiable *not* with ω , but with scholastic activity in or on γ .¹¹⁶

Also common in Late Antiquity was the practice of glossing, i.e. the addition, interlineally or in the margins, of synonyms to explain unfamiliar words, or of words to clarify syntactical and other difficulties. The intention of this glossatory activity was to ensure the continued accessibility of classical texts to a readership now long distanced from the vocabulary, syntax and culture

110 Liberman (1993) 299–302.

111 Cf. Poortvliet (1991b).

112 See, for example, Zetzel (1975) and (1981).

113 Liberman (1997) c.

114 Labardi (1983) 202.

115 Lowe (1972) 378–80; Labardi (1983) 204–6.

116 The addition of the signs must post-date the creation of the manuscript itself, but pre-date α and L.

of classical times.¹¹⁷ A negative consequence of glossing, however, was that subsequent scribes, faced with a choice of readings, often chose the easier of the two, the gloss in preference to the original text, thus effectively corrupting the text. The seventeenth-century scholar Heinsius suspected that the unusually long name of the poet, C. Valerius Flaccus Setinus Balbus (the last two variously ordered in the main manuscripts), represented a fusion of the poet's name, Valerius Flaccus, with that of an early editor, Setinus Balbus.¹¹⁸ Whereas no evidence exists to prove or refute this theory, the presence of glosses in the archetype of the tradition is beyond doubt, as betrayed, for example, by the occasional intrusion of *vel* ('or'), originally intended to preface a gloss, into the body of the text itself;¹¹⁹ compare:

4.675 *vel fallit γ : vel fallor C*¹²⁰

Sometimes, both branches of the tradition, as represented by *γ* and *C*, have incorporated into their text a reading which was probably intended as a gloss:

4.65 *fontes* Nodellius*¹²¹ : *montes ω*
4.409 *torquens* Markland*¹²² : *torrens ω*.

Where the two branches of the tradition present virtual synonyms, *difficilior lectio potior* ('the more difficult reading is preferable') must apply in order to distinguish between gloss and authentic text.¹²³ Using this principle, it seems likely that the Northern French branch of the tradition has sometimes incorporated a gloss into its text where *γ* has retained the authentic text:

¹¹⁷ Pasquali (1952) 391; Zetzel (1975) 336, 343, 346, (2005) 4; Taylor-Briggs (2006) 84–95.

¹¹⁸ See the discussion in Zissos (2008) xiii n. 3.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Taylor-Briggs (2006) 86–7.

¹²⁰ No adequate solution has yet been found to restore the sense. However, if *vel* is an intrusion prompted by the misunderstanding of a gloss, then the authenticity of the verb *fallis/fallor* is suspect.

¹²¹ As cited by Murgatroyd (2009) 60, whose defence of this emendation is highly convincing. *montes* was probably prompted by *iuga* in 4.66.

¹²² As cited by Murgatroyd (2009) 206, who again puts together a very compelling argument, shedding further light on the wit and sophistication of the poet.

¹²³ This is the safest means of discerning the existence of a gloss. Liberman's speculation ((2010) 230) that *mihi* is a gloss substituted for *patri* at 5.614 overcomes a textual difficulty, but without any manuscript authority whatsoever.

1.144	hic Peleus hic* γ : hac Peleus hac parte C
4.128	tumidis* γ : motis C ¹²⁴
5.515	dona* γ : dextram C
6.230	sisteret* γ : sterneret C

Equally, there are occasions when γ seems to have incorporated a gloss into its text against the correct text in C:

6.186	egerit* C : erigit γ
6.247	liquuntur* C : tinguuntur γ

On at least one occasion, the scribe of γ or an immediate ancestor seems to have misconstrued a gloss, allowing *-fundens* to replace *-turbans* in 6.230, where it seems more likely to have been intended to elucidate *spargens* in the preceding line:

6.230	proturbans* C : profundens L(γ ?) : profundis V
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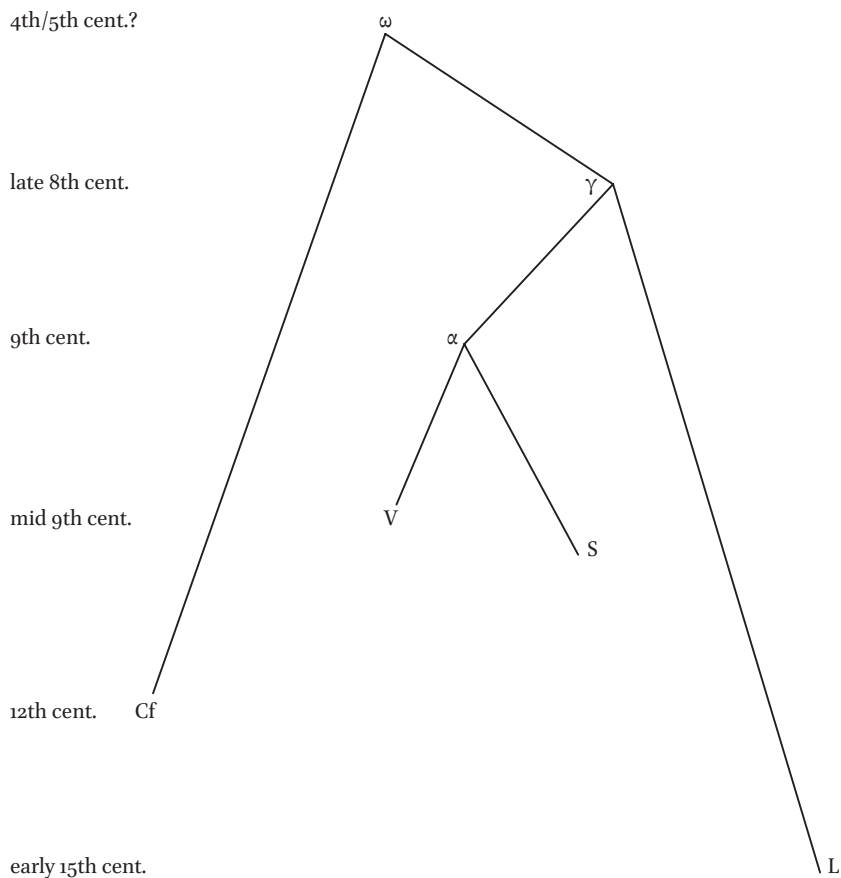
The dating of such glossatory activity is problematic, not least since it often represents a ‘process’ rather than a single event.¹²⁵ Tentatively, however, I suggest either the late fourth century, associated with a general revival of interest in Silver Latin literature,¹²⁶ or, more probably, the mid- to late-fifth century, when Valerius seems to have enjoyed some resurgence in popularity, on the evidence of the number of poets whose work he seems to have inspired, including Sidonius Apollinaris, Dracontius and the anonymous author of the ‘Orphic’ *Argonautica*.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Into this category, I also place C’s readings at 1.157; 1.751; 3.534; 5.134; 6.583.

¹²⁵ Zetzel (2005) 128.

¹²⁶ Zetzel (1975) 338.

¹²⁷ Zissos (2006b) 168–9.

Stemma**The Value of Recent Valerian Textual Criticism**

The number of scholars and works cited above testifies to the great weight of scholarship expended on Valerian textual criticism over the last century. Has this scholarship been of any real value or has it all been ‘academic’ in its popular, more pejorative, sense? Is Holford-Strevens right to be concerned that Valerian studies have fallen ‘prey to the worship of manuscripts’?¹²⁸ The true test of the value of criticism, whether textual or literary, lies in whether

¹²⁸ See above, p. 9.

or not we have a better understanding of the poet and his art. This, I believe I can assert, is indeed the case, particularly as a result of the restored status of C. Paul Murgatroyd, although the focus of his work is *not* textual criticism,¹²⁹ has used the fruits of this branch of scholarship to excellent effect. He reveals the extra sophistication that lies in 4.196,¹³⁰ transmitted by C alone: the euphony in the choice of words, the hint at a double meaning in *tumentem* ('swollen' of the river/'inflamed/bombastic' of Amycus in the analogy), the delicious subtleties in all the analogies, the organic, anticipatory function of the simile of which it represents an important part and, last but not least, the wit in likening the Argonauts to bulls, ironic given that in 4.100 we hear that Bebrycia is *not* hostile to bulls. The line cements also a literary allusion to the simile in Apollonius Rhodius 2.91, where Amycus is likened to a bull-slayer, with a highly ironic twist, and demonstrates further the close literary relationship between Valerius Flaccus and Statius. Wijsman's vindication of C's *proturbans* at 6.230 and *praereptus* at 6.571¹³¹ similarly goes some way towards restoring the poet's reputation in metrical matters, both being instances where the reading of C resolves a metrical crudity which had previously incited emendation or forced allowances to be made for the poor skill of the poet.¹³² How many more such instances will be resolved or elucidated based on recent advances in textual criticism? The work of Valerian textual critics seems to be drawing to a close: the twentieth century opened with only one manuscript considered to be of any value, but closed, much sweat and ink later, with a much more sophisticated understanding from which to reconstruct an accurate text. The task ahead for literary critics remains enshrined in the injunction added early in the tradition to the *incipit* of Book 5, *utere bono tuo feliciter*: we must use the blessings of our manuscript tradition well.

129 Murgatroyd (2009) ix.

130 Murgatroyd (2009) 117.

131 Wijsman (2000b) 221.

132 Other metrical issues resolved by accepting C are at 6.305 and 6.571.

Poet and Readers: Reflections on the Verbal and Narrative Art of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Michael Barich

Introduction

Even as scholars probe the *Argonautica* ever more deeply for political and ideological resonances with the Roman experience of its times, it is important to keep in mind that, whatever else such a poem might have meant to its Roman readers, it would be received and judged by them in large measure as a work of verbal art. They expected a complex tapestry of words skilfully chosen and arranged to satisfy and challenge their sensitivity to sometimes intricate patterns of sound and meaning, a sensitivity honed by the elite Roman reader's thorough education in rhetoric and close study of a by then classic body of Latin as well as Greek literature.¹ The high premium those Romans placed on verbal art is also attested by the manic popularity of that first-century playground of rhetoric, the showpiece performances of public declamation.² All this suggests that the verbal artistry of the *Argonautica* must be given due consideration in any interpretation of the poem.

My emphasis on the expectations of Valerius' first readers points to the importance of what scholars of literature now commonly call reception. The *Argonautica* necessarily involves more than its author's intent, since imaginative literature (and ultimately all language) is an act of communication, depending as much on the perceptions of its recipient as on the efforts of the writer. Those perceptions, like the author's acts of composition, are shaped not only by historical environment, but also by personal experience and (not least) by the degree of familiarity with antecedent literature, so that even two contemporary Roman readers could experience the poem quite differently. Moreover, the reception of a poem is open-ended, in that its succession of readers, with ourselves transiently at the end of the chain, will continue

1 On the study of rhetoric and poetry in Roman education, see Bonner (1977) 212–76.

2 Bonner (1949) remains an important survey of Roman declamation. See also Mendelson (1994); Bloomer (1997); Gunderson (2003).

indefinitely and manifest sometimes drastic shifts in its appreciation.³ Knowledge of a work's entire reception history can offer particular insights that we might otherwise miss and provides, at the very least, a salutary reminder of the contingency of our own interpretations.

The reception of the poem by its first audience would merit special consideration for being closest to, though not always in complete harmony with, the author's expectations of his readership, expectations that would have in fact influenced his composition. Unfortunately, the absence of direct evidence makes the first reception of Valerius' *Argonautica* impossible to recover.⁴ We do, however, know something of the first-century Roman literary world's practices and tastes,⁵ knowledge that should inform, but not simplistically constrain, our own interpretations of the period's literature. Even as we rightly apply the insights of modern literary theory and hermeneutics, we should give due consideration to first-century 'ways of reading', including the guidance we find in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* and earlier in Horace's *Ars Poetica* and the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Our study of the *Argonautica* would benefit from a clearer correlation of modern and ancient critical terminology and a more precise and explicit mapping of our own interpretive principles and models onto those of the first century, so as to identify congruencies and gaps between modern and ancient hermeneutics. The resultant scrutiny of the fundamental assumptions in both ancient and modern literary analysis would help us to refine (or, when necessary, sharply revise) our interpretive models and methods so as to avoid both blithe anachronism and specious historical authenticity.

Valerius and Virgil

It seems inevitable that in the wake of the *Aeneid* Roman Argonauts would sail a Virgilian sea. That Augustan poet had redefined the language and all

3 The vicissitudes of even the great Virgil's reputation in the last 200 years well attest this; see Johnson (1976) 1–22. Zissos (2006b) surveys the reception of Valerius' *Argonautica* since antiquity.

4 Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.1.90) expresses regret at Valerius' passing but offers no comment on the *Argonautica*. The best available window into its reception by contemporaries might be Statius' *imitatio* of the *Argonautica*; see Vessey (1973) 170–87 and the essay by Parkes in this volume.

5 On the tastes of the Flavian period, see Bardon (1962) and Boyle (2003) 1–69; Fantham (1996) 153–82 (with a rather negative summary judgement of Valerius (168)).

other aspects of Roman epic so decisively as to demand some combination of emulation, challenge or other response from every subsequent writer in this genre. Study of the language and style of the *Argonautica* has therefore understandably focused on its relationship to the *Aeneid*.⁶ The profusion of Virgilian vocabulary, themes and plot elements in Valerius' poem is generally acknowledged, but there is considerable disagreement as to what these appropriations add up to. The *Argonautica* was long regarded as straightforwardly Virgilian, with its success variously judged.⁷ More recently, others have viewed the *Argonautica* as deploying the very language and narrative structures of the *Aeneid* to subvert Virgilian epic and deny its possibility in a new age.⁸ The latter see the *Argonautica* as a subtly ironic poem and even a surprising mythological counterpart to Lucan's iconoclastic historical epic,⁹ with a sophisticated awareness of the problematic position of one writing in the aftermath of Virgil's enormous achievement. On any of these readings, however, the Virgilian language, as further developed by Ovid, Seneca and Lucan, remains Valerius' idiom, and the *Aeneid* a principal point of thematic reference for interpreting the *Argonautica*.

Intertextuality and Style

Not only the interpretation of Virgilian elements in the *Argonautica* but also their very identification remains an issue. No simple rules can prove that a particular adaptation from the *Aeneid* or elsewhere results from authorial

6 Nordera (1969) remains a fundamental survey; see also Hardie (1989) and (1993); Korn (1991); Schimann (1998).

7 Summers (1894) 54–67, a sympathetic reader of the *Argonautica*, offers eleven pages of positives and three of negatives on Valerius' Latin; Vessey (1982) 590 picturesquely expresses an until recently common view of Valerius as ultimately defeated by excessive fidelity to Virgil: 'He gave the fanatical assent of a convert to a credo... Dispassionate appraisal concludes that he had not grasped the implications of his faith, or at least he was incapable of living up to it.' Most recently, Stover (2012a) has emphasised a political significance for Vespasian's regime in the recuperation of Virgilian epic after a disruptive challenge from Lucan's *Bellum Civile*; see also his essay in this volume.

8 Eigler in Eigler and Lefèvre (1998) 43–4.

9 Zissos (2004b) concludes: 'one aspect of [Valerius'] program is the use of Lucanian echoes to inject a sense of disjunction, of ironic doubling, into an epic universe which is largely Vergilian in its essential underpinnings. Such *ironia allusiva* functions as a part of an ongoing strategy of containment, aimed at counteracting the stylistic and ideological influence of the *Aeneid* on Valerius' poem' (36).

intent.¹⁰ Moreover, the operation of allusion or intertextuality depends also on each reader's knowledge, expectations and perceptivity, and how readers understand its many appropriations of Virgil (or of other predecessors) will profoundly shape their experience of the *Argonautica*. A central question here concerns thematically significant allusion: to what degree and in what ways do elements of Virgilian language or narrative structure at specific points in the *Argonautica* activate the reader's engagement with the source contexts? It certainly makes a great difference whether readers at any particular point in the narrative are led to recognise the specific provenance of such an adaptation or only, at most, to detect its broadly Virgilian character. Even once recognised, the source context can evoke a range of responses, from a simple appreciative nod acknowledging a clever borrowing to the pondering of possibly complex counterpoint between the two narrative contexts in search of implied meaning where patterns of parallelism and contrast might reinforce or even ironically undercut the surface narrative. The recent trend in Valerian scholarship has been towards detecting ever more complex intertextuality of the latter sort and towards finding ever more subtle verbal or other triggers of its recognition. Less attention has been given to the 'stylistic' aspects of Valerius' poetic appropriations. Words and phrases adapted not only from Virgil but also from Ovid, Lucan, Seneca and other predecessors of Valerius are found in abundance throughout the *Argonautica*; this reflects their status as a prestigious quarry of language or, to shift the metaphor, as paintpots of poetic expression, from which the new poet can take a ready-made *mot juste* or retouch a predecessor's phrase into something fresh and suitable to a new context.¹¹ How did these incessant echoes affect the Roman readers' sensitivity to potential thematic engagement with specific passages in predecessor poetry? Did they raise the bar for thematically significant allusion, so as to require more pronounced signals in the text? Or did they prime readers to be more receptive to very subtle contextual interplay? This is not to say that a purely verbal *imitatio* is easily separable from thematic interplay; intertextuality is a complex varying mixture

10 Wills (1996) analyses in meticulous detail one important aspect of allusive signals: how specific patterns of repetition can serve as vehicles of allusion.

11 How exactly Valerius worked with the physical texts of his predecessors is a matter of (pleasant) speculation. Are we to imagine him with scrolls of Virgil, Ovid and others arrayed before him, pausing now and then to unroll a volume to a particular passage? (Did he own copies, or depend on the generosity of bibliophilic friends, or perhaps even at times scurry to one of Rome's public libraries, such as the newly built *bibliotheca* in the Flavian *Templum Pacis*?) Or should we think of him as mainly relying on a memory steeped in repeated readings of the greats? In any case, his close familiarity with these predecessor texts is evident.

of both.¹² But the verbal dimension of appropriation raises its own questions of interpretation, in that it both reflects the later writer's assumptions about how poetic language communicates and possibly also constitutes an implied commentary specifically on the language and rhetoric of the predecessor text. We await a comprehensive explication of the *Argonautica*'s modalities of intertextuality, whether verbal, metrical or structural, that might offer consistent criteria of its assessment. In the meantime, we will look to focused studies like those in Part IV of this volume to elucidate more fully the 'mechanisms' as well as the significance of proposed instances of intertextuality.

Perceptions of Valerius' Style

Readers' experience of intertextuality in the *Argonautica* will be one important factor in how they perceive its 'style', which can be broadly defined as a synoptic impression of the poem's complex constellation of countless details. Word choice and arrangement along with the deployment of particular sonic and semantic figures create a distinctive interplay of sound, sense and metrical rhythm. Within this, readers will note such qualities as the tone and perspective of the narrator's voice and its relation to the characters' speech patterns, predilections in imagery, the pacing of the story, and the degree and the ways in which different parts of the narrative are interconnected. Readers' perception of these characteristics in their totality, along with incidental quirks of expression, may be said to constitute the poem's style.

Important groundwork for a comprehensive understanding of the poetic idiom of the *Argonautica* has been done. Nineteenth-century studies usefully catalogued specific rhetorical features, and after a subsequent period of neglect, Valerius' language has received detailed attention in numerous new commentaries on part or all of the *Argonautica*.¹³ A few components of Valerius' poetic language, notably similes,¹⁴ have recently received systematic

12 See Hinds (1998) 17–51 for a stimulating discussion of broader controversies concerning intertextuality in Roman poetry. Heerink (2007) explicates well the complexities of one particular case of Valerius' intertextuality.

13 Among older studies, Summers (1894) and Langen (1896–7) stand out for their perceptivity. Kleywegt (1986) concisely analyses Valerius' lexical and syntactical innovations. Scaffai (1986b) 2436–41 reviews the few studies specifically devoted to Valerius' poetic language and metrics from 1938 to 1982; see also Ehlers (1971–2). Zissos (2008) xxxix–lxi offers, with illustrative examples mainly from Book 1, a survey that could serve as a checklist of aspects of Valerius' language and style that need more comprehensive study.

14 Fitch (1976); Gärtner (1994).

examination, but much scope remains for more thorough analysis of particular elements of style like those enumerated above.

Analysis of style can in principle be purely descriptive but in practice tends to include value judgements. Literary criticism of Valerius Flaccus and other Roman writers was long content to express decisive verdicts based on aesthetic standards assumed as self-evident. In the early 1970s some scholars adduced the concept of mannerism as a basis for understanding an alternative aesthetic in Roman writers of the first century.¹⁵ They correctly recognised the necessity of uncovering the particular aesthetic assumptions, the rules of the game, as it were, of each literary milieu, and indeed of each individual writer, an important guiding principle for subsequent scholarship.

Often observed in the *Argonautica* has been its tendency for brevity. This is reflected in the pervasive brachylogy of its Latin, which sometimes challenges comprehension, the predominance of shorter episodes, and the less frequent long speeches compared to other Roman epics.¹⁶ Characters in the *Argonautica* do, however, show a certain tendency to 'pile up' arguments in a way that resembles the catalogic argumentation typical of the *suasoriae* and *controversiae* of Roman declamation. This can be an effective mode of characterisation, as when Medea's mother lists a succession of ever more unrealistic possible courses of action that express her growing desperation as her daughter sails away (8.166–70), or in Meleager's chain of devious arguments to justify leaving Hercules behind (3.649–89), or Aeetes' litany of scorn towards the Argonauts (7.35–77). Most often, however, a character's words express in taut and concentrated language the emotion of the narrative moment, tracing the ebb and flow of the speaker's own feelings or the shifting moods of the story.¹⁷ Ostensibly 'objective',¹⁸ the narrator's voice in the *Argonautica* shows a similar concentration of charged language and a focus on the drama of human emotion. Although Valerius' poem lacks the insistent intrusiveness of Lucan's narratorial 'I', its shared emotive language of narrator and characters nonethe-

15 Burck (1971a); Vessey (1973) 7–14; Venini (1971) observes in the *Argonautica* a 'postclassical' sensibility.

16 Lipscomb (1909) 13–15 gives statistics on the length and frequency of speeches in Roman epics.

17 Medea's sequence of nocturnal soliloquies is the outstanding example of this *aestus* of emotion in the *Argonautica*. At 7.9–20 Medea seems to be bringing her feelings under control and ready to let go of Jason, but at 7.128–40 she struggles again with a succession of conflicting impulses and desperate rationalisations before her passion for Jason wins out. On Medea's emotional struggles, see also Davis and Fucecchi in this volume.

18 Ferenczi (2004) examines the Valerian narrator and finds a modernised traditionalism ("modernen", zeitgemäßen Traditionalismus', 57). Sauer (2011) finds the patterns of ancient drama strongly reflected in the *Argonautica*.

less marks a narrower distance between them than in Apollonius Rhodius.¹⁹ This ‘psychologisation’ of the Argonautic story reflects the influence of Virgil’s ‘subjective style’,²⁰ but Valerius’ development is distinctive.²¹ An analysis of *Argonautica* 5.1–216 will show this and highlight other key aspects of Valerius’ verbal art that shape the reader’s experience of the poem.

A Reading of *Argonautica* 5.1–216

This first part of Book 5 constitutes the final stage of the Argonauts’ outbound voyage and is organised into short scenes of 10–50 lines. Beginning with a pivotal sunrise, it ends with the Argo’s sunset arrival in Colchis, and is immediately followed by a new invocation of the Muse that formally signals the poem’s second half (217–21).²² The book opens with a succinct description of the dawn following a happy night of banqueting with King Lycus:

Altera lux haud laeta viris emersit Olympo:
 Argolicus morbis fatisque rapacibus Idmon
 labitur extremi sibi tum non inscius aevi.
 at memor Aesonides nimium iam vera locuti
 Phineos hinc alios raptio pavet Idmone luctus. 5
 tum comiti pia iusta tulit caelataque multa
 arte Dolionii donat velamina regis,
 hospes humum sedemque Lycus. flens arma revellit
 Idmonis e celsa Mopsus rate. robora caedunt
 pars silvis portantque arae, pars auguris alba 10
 fronde caput vittisque ligant positumque feretro
 congemuere; dies simul et suos admonet omnes.²³

19 It would be too simplistic to attribute this wholly to a ‘recitation mentality’ shaped by ‘one-man shows’ in which an author performed the entire text, but recitation was certainly congenial to assimilating the voices of narrator and characters and may have had some influence.

20 Otis (1963) 41–96.

21 Mehmél (1934) correctly indicated the prominence of the language of emotion but saw it as indicative of narrative incoherence (*Sinnlosigkeit*), not recognising its association with the *Argonautica*’s equal emphasis on thematic interconnection, discussed below.

22 The arguments of Schetter (1959) that Valerius designed his *Argonautica* in eight books have yet to be convincingly challenged. Zissos (2004d) detects complex markers of closure signalling the end of this first half of the *Argonautica*.

23 The Latin text of the *Argonautica* follows Ehlers (1980).

The next light of day rose up into the heaven,
 no joy to the men: by illness and fate's greed
 Argive Idmon weakens; well he knows then
 life's end is near. And Jason, remembering
 the words of Phineus, proven now too true,
 with Idmon taken, fears yet other griefs.
 He then gives his comrade rites he's due
 and the gift of a shroud from Doliones' king,
 embroidered with fine craft, while Lycus their host
 gave the soil for his final resting place.
 Mopsus in tears tore Idmon's armour from the tall ship.
 Some cut down trees in the woods and transport them 10
 to the altar; others tie white leaves and bands
 round the augur's head and mourn him, laid on the bier.
 Each man's now made to think of his own last day.²⁴
 (5.1–12)

This compact scene is tightly framed, opening with dawn (1) and suggesting its closure by the emphatically enjambed *congemuere* followed by a quasi-epigram on common mortality (12). Ancient epic poets had long used descriptions of sunrise, sunset or other time markers as formal brackets for episodes; Valerius continues this tradition, often with his characteristic compression and emotional associations.²⁵ This dawn's descriptor (*haud laeta*) explicitly signals a change from the previous night's mirth to the sorrow of two major Argonauts' deaths. The sense of these as preordained events is introduced in the hendiadys *morbis fatisque rapacibus* that associates Idmon's illness with fate and is reinforced by Idmon's own recognition of his imminent end, which echoes and fulfils Idmon's earlier private vision of his own lost return, and by Jason's recall of Phineus' prophecy of losses to come.²⁶ These characters' recollections

24 All translations are my own; for Valerius' *Argonautica* they are adapted from Barich (2009).

25 Gärtner (1998) surveys Valerius' indications of time and finds here as elsewhere an artful and sometimes symbolic enhancement of the narrative; she corrects the negative assessment of Mehmél (1934) 22.

26 Idmon: *lacrimae cecidere canenti* | *quod sibi iam clausos invenit in ignibus Argos* ('Tears fell as he spoke, for now he saw | the flames had barred his own return to Argos', 1.238–9); Phineus: *hic lecto comitum de robore siquem* | *perculerit vicina lues, ne defice casus* | *praedicti memor* ('If in that place a plague strikes down someone | among your finest men, do not falter: | remember that the loss was prophesied', 4.591–3). Mopsus' climactic gesture of grief (5.8–9) comes appropriately from Idmon's fellow seer. Its intensity perhaps recalls

trigger and model readers' own memory of those earlier moments in the poem.²⁷ Similarly, the narrator's mention of Cyzicus' gift cloak used as Idmon's funeral shroud recalls the tragedy of that king's death.²⁸ Through these concise and specific allusions the reader experiences a distinctive sense of interconnectedness bathed in emotional intensity reinforced by echoes of Misenus' exequies in the *Aeneid*, including the hallowed epic motif of felling trees for pyres, which sustains here the impression of a traditional heroic funeral.²⁹ This association of strong emotion with internal allusion creates the impression of a narrative under tight control, even as turbulent emotions swirl.³⁰

Jason's foreboding of yet another grief (5) is a bridge to the next stage of the narrative, the more lingering death of Tiphys:

ecce inter lacrimas interque extrema virorum
munera, quem cursus penes imperiumque carinae,
Tiphyn agit violenta lues cunctique pavore
attoniti fundunt maestas ad sidera voces: 15
'arquipotens adverte, precor, nunc denique Apollo!
hoc, pater, hoc nobis refove caput, ulla laboris
si nostri te cura movet, qui cardine summo
vertitur atque omnis manibus nunc pendet ab unis! 20
dicta dabant ventis nec debita fata movebant.
qualem praecipiti gravidum iam sorte parentem

Mopsus' frenzied prophecy (1.211–26), which immediately preceded Idmon's own calmer vision.

- 27 Cf. Erginus' recollection of the Symplegades crossing (8.180–2), where Wills ((1996) 105) calls the twice repeated *memini* an 'external marker of allusion'.
- 28 There too came a grim dawn, of bitter irony, as first daylight revealed the Argonauts' terrible error in fighting the Cyzicans, and apparent martial glory melted into the horrific recognition of their unwitting hospicide (3.257–9). At yet another dawn of dark irony, Medea seeks lustral relief in Phasis' cleansing waters after a night of fearful dreams but encounters instead the newly arrived Jason, which proves the beginning of her troubles (5.329–99).
- 29 Notable are Valerius' adoption (10) of Virgil's innovative use of *ara* to mean a pyre (*Aen.* 6.177) and the echo (5) of *heu nimium de te vates, Misene, locuta est* (*Aen.* 6.189). On funerary tree-felling in epic, see Williams (1968) 264–7 and Spaltenstein (2004a) on 3.311–12, where Valerius also deploys this motif.
- 30 Most striking in its frequency and elaboration is the extended series of foreshadowings, spread throughout the poem, of the disastrous future of Jason and Medea, a special case in that those events lie beyond the limits of Valerius' narrative, on which see the essay by Peter Davis in this volume.

natorum flet parva manus trepidique precantur
duret ut invalidis et adhuc genitoris egenis,
haud aliter socii supremo in tempore Tiphyn 25
ante alios superesse volunt. mors frigida contra
urget et ille recens oculis intervallo Idmon.
exanimus frustra Minyae clamore morantur
avellique negant: vix membra rigentia tandem
imposuere rogo lacrimasque et munera flammis 30
vana ferunt, crescit donis feralis acervus.
ut vero amplexus fessi rupere supremos
et rapidae sonuere faces, tunc ipsa cremari
visa ratis medioque viros deponere ponto.

And as they weep and pay their last respects,
a violent plague takes Tiphys: his the command
of their ship's course. In shock, they all pour out
grim words to heaven: 'Hear me now at last
I pray, Apollo, mighty in your bow;
father, restore this man to health, if you
take thought for this our task, in crisis now,
for all is in the hands of this one man.' 20
They spoke to the winds and could not change his fate.
As a father ill with swift approaching death
is mourned by the tiny cluster of his children:
full of fear they pray he might hold on,
since they are weak and need a father still.
Just so in these last hours his mates want Tiphys
most of all to live, but the cold of death
presses in, and Idmon just now gone
flashes before their eyes. They call to him
and try to make the dead man linger on,
to no avail. They won't be taken from him,
they hardly can put the stiff limbs on the pyre at last 30
and give the flames their tears and empty rite;
the mound for the dead grows tall with gifts.
When the weary men broke off their last embrace
and torches crackled swiftly, indeed it seemed
the ship herself was burning and had cast
her men far out at sea.

(5.13–34)

As at other intense moments, Valerius' Argonauts are a collective focus of emotion.³¹ They voice in unison an earnest prayer for Tiphys' recovery, still haunted by obsessive thoughts of Idmon. Powerful images reflect their sense of vulnerability and abandonment: they seem like children losing the father they still depend on, and the funeral torches morph into a vision of the Argo burning and themselves lost at sea. An outpouring of traditional funerary gestures and the familiar Roman vocabulary of grief sweep the reader along with a seething compression typical of Valerius' poem:

non tulit Aesonius geminis flagrantia cernens	35
corpora cara rogis, sed pectore ductor ab imo	
talia voce gemit: 'quid tantum infensa repente	
numina? quas nostri poenas meruere labores?	
bina (nefas) toto pariter mihi funera surgunt	
litore. magna adeo comitum numerosaque pubes?	40
aut socios rapit atra dies aut ipse relinquo	
sontibus impulsus Furiis. ubi Tiphys? ubi Idmon	
fata canens? ubi monstrierae par ille novercae?	
te sine, Thespiade, nos ulla movebimus ultra	
aequora? nec summa speculantem puppe videbo	45
Pleiadumque globos et agentes noctibus Arctos?	
cui Minyas caramque ratem, cui sidera tradis?	
carpere securas quis iam iubet Aesona noctes?	
hoc labor, hoc dulci totiens fraudata sopore	
lumina et admotis nimium mens anxia Colchis	50
profruit? heu quantum Phasis, quantum Aea recessit!	
nunc quoque, si tenui superant in imagine curae,	
adsis umbra, precor, venturi praescia caeli	
rectoremque tuae moneas ratis.' haec ubi fatus,	
sola virum flammis vidit labentibus ossa.	55
'quod tamen externis unum solamen in oris	
restat,' ait 'caras humus haec non dividat umbras	
ossaque nec tumulo nec separe contegat urna,	
sed simul, ut iunctis venistis in aequora fati.'	
haud mora, reliquias socii defletaque miscent	60
nomina. tum vivo frondens e caespote tellus	
aggeritur cinerem Lyco commendat Iason.	

31 Cf. their collective terror during the storm of book one (1.621–38), punctuated by a brief 'reaction shot' of Hercules staring at his club, useless against the elements (634–5).

maesti omnes dubiique, ratem fidissima cuius
 dextra regat. simul Ancaeus sollersque petebat
 Nauplius. Erginum fato vocat ipsa monenti 65
 quercus et ad tonsas victi rediere magistri.
 ac velut ille, gregis cessit cui regia, taurus
 fertur ovans, hunc omnis honos, hunc omnis in unum
 transit amor. primo laetus sic tempore rector
 ingreditur cursus. etenim dat candida certam 70
 nox Helicen. iam prora fretum commoverat et iam
 puppe sedens < *** > dimiserat ancora terras.

. . . The son of Aeson
 did not endure to see twin pyres alight
 with those dear bodies, and the captain
 from his deepest heart voiced this lament:
 'Why such sudden hostile acts of god?
 What punishment has this effort earned?
 Two funeral pyres—unspeakable!—rise up
 on all the shore. Is then my crew of men 40
 so plentiful? Death's dark day removes my mates,
 or else I leave them, spurred by wicked Furies.
 Where is Tiphys? Where is Idmon now
 who tells what is to come? And where is he
 who is a match for a stepmother and her monsters?
 Without you, son of Thespius, can we churn
 any more seas? Shall I never see you watching
 from the deck Pleiads' cluster or Bears' course?
 To whom do you trust the Minyae, dear ship, and stars?
 Who will tell Aeson to enjoy calm nights?
 Is this the fruit of toil, of eyes deprived 50
 so many times of their sweet sleep, of thoughts
 grown anxious as the Colchians came nearer?
 How far seems Phasis now and the land of Aea!
 Even now, if any thought remains
 in frail wraith, I pray your ghost will help us:
 advise the helmsman of your ship, for you
 know well what heaven's signs will bring.' He spoke
 and saw mere bones amidst the dying flames.
 'Yet you shall have one solace left in strangers'
 land: this ground shall not part the beloved ghosts;

one urn you'll have and but a single tomb
 together, as you came here, fates linked at sea.
 They wait no more, and the shipmates blend the remains 60
 and names they mourn; and then they raise a mound
 built of earth with clods of living green,
 while Jason entrusts to Lycus the ashes' care.
 Everyone was downhearted, unsure whose hand
 would be most trusty at the helm of Argo.
 Ancaeus sought the post and deft Nauplius.
 The ship's oak herself at fortune's bidding calls
 Erginus, and the bested captains returned to their oars.
 Just like that bull to whom lordship of the herd
 has passed, who goes round gloating, whose alone
 is every love and glory: so does he
 the happy helmsman for the first time set his course,
 and a shining night gives Helice's sure guidance. 70
 Already had the prow begun to churn the sea,
 and the anchor let go that land to rest on deck.
 (5.35–72)

Here Jason appears again as 'mourner-in-chief' and voice for the grieving Argonauts.³² The reader is swept along in a succession of rhetorical questions (nine in all!), which are peppered with anaphora and swell to a tricolon crescendo that echoes a moment of Virgilian pathos.³³ A passionate apostrophe to the dead Tiphys emphasises his intimacy with the Argo (*caramque ratem*, 'dear ship', 47; *tuae . . . ratis*, 'your ship', 54), and a litany of losses brings Jason to the edge of despair about the mission (48–51). The apostrophe becomes

32 We see Jason in the same role at the funeral of King Cyzicus and his speech there has a similar structure (3.290–313): address to the deceased, a succession of charged rhetorical questions, and a concluding call to complete the rites of burial. There too others' gestures of grief are a preamble to Jason's words (3.274–85). In that episode, however, Valerius extends the mood of mourning and despondency with the additional lament of Clite (3.314–31), an elaborate description of the funeral itself (3.332–61), Mopsus' metaphysical disquisition and expiatory ceremony (3.362–458); together these scenes constitute a highly wrought drama and meditation on the psychology and theology of human grief. On the Cyzicus episode, see Manuwald (1999).

33 Caught in a raging storm at sea, Aeneas remembers fellow warriors lost at Troy (*Aen.* 1.99–101). Valerius reproduces the three-fold *ubi* of Aeneas' lament, raising the intensity further by turning Virgil's relative *ubi* into an exclamatory interrogative. He also preserves in *ubi Idmon* (42) the uncommon elision between the last two *metra* in Virgil's *ubi ingens* (99).

a prayer to Tiphys for his continued guidance of the ship's next helmsman (52–54), an anticipation of that election in the next scene. Here again internal allusion sharpens the moment, as Jason's reminiscence of Tiphys' gaze trained on the guiding stars recalls the time Tiphys first took the helm:³⁴

pervigil Arcadio Tiphys pendebat ab astro
Hagniades, felix stellis qui segnibus usum
et dedit aequoreos caelo duce tendere cursus.

All night upon the Northern Bear intent
was Tiphys, son of Hagnius, happy man
who gave unto the lazy stars a use,
as heaven's guide to steer a seaward course.
(1.481–3)

The pyre's settling flames (55) signal a *diminuendo* and an approaching narrative transition as Jason completes the rites, but his final words to the dead nonetheless present a veritable verbal 'rhapsody' on the idea of Idmon and Tiphys united in death (*non dividat . . . nec separe . . . sed simul . . . ut iunctis . . . fatis . . . miscent nomina*), an example of Valerius' occasional extended pleonasm.³⁵

The reader senses closure as the grave mound piles up and Jason entrusts its care to Lycus (61–2). Sorrow and doubt linger for a moment (63), but decisive guidance from the ship's vatic plank quickly marks Erginus as Tiphys' worthy successor. The new helmsman happily takes his station (69–70), his joy reflected in the image of a triumphant bull (*ovans*, 68), a simile that also confirms the otherwise unstated affection and respect of the crewmen for the new man (*honos . . . amor*, 68–9). A crisp night gives reassurance, shining with reliable stars like those that guided Tiphys, conjuring once more his iconic pose in Book 1, while the churning prow and weighed anchor signal a decisive departure from the sadness of that land. The emotional shift takes place in a few lines, but it is carefully modulated.³⁶

34 Thomas Chappell Lewis vividly captures that image in an ink drawing: Barich (2009) 46.

35 Cf. the clustered vocabulary of fear in 5.329–41: *territa . . . horrendas . . . pavens . . . stupefacta . . . paventes . . . trementum . . . turbata*.

36 Valerius similarly deploys emotional intensity to effect a narrative transition when the Argonauts leave Hercules behind (3. 715–25) and at the end of their sojourn in Lemnos (2.418–30).

Lists of lands sailed past are an inevitable recurrent feature of an Argonautic voyage and offer the pleasure of vicarious travel to places the ancient reader has likely never seen. Several of these passages punctuate this part of Book 5 (73–81; 101–12; 140–53). Such lists are a particular species of epic catalogue: they lend a sense of progression to the narrative but also present the opportunity for digressive elaboration. Valerius has fewer and shorter bare lists of names than Apollonius and his elaborations are less purely ethnographic or aetiological. It is instructive to compare 5.101–12 with Apollonius 2.930–54 to see how Valerius reshapes his Greek model to suit his artistic vision. Apollonius stresses the onward movement of the *Argo*, comparing it to a swift hawk and listing in rapid succession seven places skirted by the ship (2.933–5, 940–5). He elaborates only the first and last elements of the list, noting Diana's predilection for bathing in the river Parthenius (2.936–9) and ending with the story of the nymph Sinope, told more expansively in his characteristic neo-Homeric, ostensibly straightforward narrative style (2.946–54). Valerius creates a more complex and emotive web of imagery and allusion: the narrator's apostrophe to Tiphys adds a lingering echo of his recent sad loss (5.102–3) and the story of Sinope is treated more allusively:

iamque reducebat noctem polus: alta Carambis
raditur et magnae pelago tremit umbra Sinopes.
Assyrios complexa sinus stat opima Sinope,
nympha prius blandosque Iovis quae luserat ignes 110
caelicolis immota procis: deceptus amatae
fraude deae nec solus Halys nec solus Apollo.

The sky now brought back night; they skirt past tall
Carambis, and the shadow from great Sinope
shimmers on sea. Embracing Assyrian coves,
Sinope stands there fertile: once a nymph,
she cheated Jove's sweet-talking fires, unmoved
by any suitor god. Halys was not
the only one deceived, nor was Apollo,
by trickery of the goddess that they loved.
(5.107–12)

Valerius cleverly interweaves the two aspects of Sinope as place and as nymph through the ambiguity of *complexa* ('embracing'). Sinope's failed seduction is reframed in terms suggestive of Roman love elegy: her divine suitors are each cast as a cheated lover (*deceptus*) and the striking phrase *blandos ignes* is a

combination, unique to Valerius,³⁷ of two favourite words of the Roman erotic elegiac vocabulary. The adjective *blandos* brings a hint of personification to *ignes*, while these fires of Jupiter's passion contrast neatly with the shadow (*umbra*) that (the land) Sinope casts upon the sea (107). This exemplifies Valerius' intermittent brilliance in creating *callidæ iuncturae*, a notable component of his verbal inventiveness.³⁸

Two other elaborated 'passings' are noteworthy here. Valerius reshapes Apollonius' impressive but statuesque description of the dead hero Sthenelus, in full armour watching the Argo sail by from atop his tomb (2.911–20), into a dazzling epiphany accented with strong light-in-dark imagery³⁹ (5.92–4) and gives it special thematic significance by explicitly referencing the poem's recurrent intergenerational perspective on heroic *gloria* (5.82–4).⁴⁰ A wider theme of the poem also recurs when the Argo passes the Chalybes, makers of weapons who thereby enable the human descent into the more deadly forms of conflict also abetted by the Argonauts' opening of the sea.⁴¹

Though left behind in Mysia, Hercules maintains a presence in the narrative through Valerius' series of characteristically brief references to him, including Jason's lament of losing him (5.41–3, quoted above) and a simile comparing Sthenelus to Hercules (5.89–91). More extensively, Jason hears from three new-found crewmen a summary of Hercules' exploits they witnessed against the Amazons (5.131–9), appropriately recounted indirectly in *oratio obliqua*. These passages prepare for Hercules' crowning feat in the Argonautica, liberating the enchained Prometheus, an action already foretold and sanctioned by Jupiter (4.58–81):

37 Valerius uses this phrase one other time, to describe Hysipyle's growing passion for Jason (2.354).

38 Other examples in this part of Book 5: *miscent nomina* (60–1); *arma fatigant* (141); *candida nox* (70); *flammabat aquas* (177) (these last two with a touch of oxymoron, as Wijsman (1996) *ad loc.* observes; on Valerius' use of oxymoron, see also Kleywegt (1986) 2475–7).

39 Venini (1972) notes Valerius' predilection for night scenes. These can provide the backdrop for strong visual contrasts between light and dark, as seen here and in the Cyzicus episode (especially 3.95–102).

40 The elaboration of Sthenelus' apparition is perhaps a substitute for Apollonius Rhodius' epiphany of Apollo (2.674–719), which Valerius omits. Jason's father Aeson similarly takes pleasure in the prospect of his son's achievement (1.342–7). These intergenerational moments find further resonance in the fact that a number of Argonauts are the fathers of future warriors in the later Trojan War, which is recurrently foreshadowed in Valerius' *Argonautica*; on Valerius' incorporation of the Trojan War into his *Argonautica*, see Barnes (1981).

41 Adamietz (1976) 21; cf. especially Jupiter's apostrophe to the war-demon Bellona (1.545–6).

ultimus inde sinus saevumque cubile Promethei
 cernitur, in gelidas consurgens Caucasus Arctos. 155
 ille etiam Alciden Titania fata morantem
 attulerat tum forte dies iamque aspera nisu
 undique convellens veteris cum strage pruinae
 vincula prensa manu saxis abduxerat imis
 arduus et laevo gravior pede. consonat ingens 160
 Caucasus et summo pariter cum monte secutae
 incubuere trabes abductaque flumina ponto.
 fit fragor, aetherias ceu Iuppiter arduus arces
 impulerit imas manus aut Neptunia terras.
 horruit immensum Ponti latus, horruit omnis 165
 Armeniae praetentus Hiber penitusque recusso
 aequore Cyaneas Minyae timuere relictas.
 tum gemitu propiore chalybs densusque revulsis
 rupibus audiri montis labor et grave Titan
 vociferans, fixos scopulis dum vellitur artus. 170
 contra autem ignari (quis enim nunc credat in illis
 montibus Alciden dimissave vota retemptet?)
 pergere iter socii. tantum mirantur ab alto
 litora discussa sterni nive ruptaque saxa
 et simul ingentem moribundae desuper umbram 175
 alitis atque atris rorantes imbribus auras.

And next they glimpse the inlet most remote,
 Prometheus' merciless bed, the Caucasus
 that soars into the frigid northern sky.
 By chance that very day had brought Alcides
 there to stay the Titan's fate. He'd torn at
 the jagged rocks everywhere, straining and scattering
 ancient ice. Then he had seized the chains with his hand,
 and, lifting himself high and bracing left foot, 160
 he had pulled them from the very bedrock.
 Great Caucasus resonates and trees collapsed
 with the mountain peak, and streams recede from the sea.
 There came a thunderclap, as if Jove on high
 assailed the bastions of the sky, or Neptune
 put his mighty hand to the depths of earth.
 Vast coast of Pontus shook, all Hiber shook,
 up to Armenia: the whole sea convulsed,
 and the Minyae feared the Rocks they'd left behind.

And then as iron's clang came near they heard
 the mountain's frequent pangs of rocks shorn off and
 Titan's deep groans as enchained limbs were freed. 170
 His mates are unaware that Hercules
 has journeyed there—who could believe it true,
 him there on that mountain, or test again
 the hopes renounced?—from sea they only wonder
 at the shoreline strewn with snow and broken rocks,
 at the huge shadow of the dying bird above
 and at the breezes dripping down dark rain.
 (5.154–76)

The liberation of Prometheus is framed by dramatic irony: the Argonauts are unaware of Hercules' presence but see and hear the effects of his actions (5.168–76). The brief 'battle' description here gives just a glimpse of Hercules himself and emphasises instead his impact, including the rocks and ice he scatters, details that bridge nicely to the Argonauts' uncomprehending observation of this debris and the scene's climactic image⁴² of Prometheus' bleeding avian tormentor, whose fatal wounding by Hercules Valerius leaves the reader to infer. The Argonauts' anxious flashback to the Clashing Rocks accents the irony of their ignorance through a characteristically pointed internal allusion.⁴³ The brevity of this battle contrasts with the lengthy exposition of Hercules' earlier fight with the sea monster at Troy (2.497–550) and other combats in the *Argonautica*⁴⁴ or with the long struggle between Hercules and Cacus in

42 Valerius sometimes ends a speech or other sequence with a surprising image or idea: Hypsipyle doesn't quite trust herself and so says to her father as they flee the Lemnian slaughter: *iam fuge, iam dubiae donum rape mentis et ense | tu potius, miser, oro, tene* ('now flee and take the gift of a wavering heart, and you hold the sword instead, poor man, I beg you' 2.252–3); Medea says to the dragon she has lulled to sleep with her magic: *nec te saltem, miserande, peremi* ('at least, poor one, I didn't kill you' 8.99). These 'terminal twists' are perhaps analogous in effect to the terminal *sententiae* beloved by many early imperial writers but rare in the *Argonautica* (5.324; 6.314; 8.43). The narrator's striking vision of personified *Gloria* beckoning the Argonauts from Phasis' bank (1.76–8) might also be compared in its effect.

43 Cf. the Argonauts' collective anxiety as they await the appearance of the Symplegades (4.637–40).

44 Contrast also the extended duel of Pollux with Amycus, with elaborately described prelude and aftermath (4.99–343) or Jason's struggle with the fiery bulls and earth-born men. (7.539–653).

the *Aeneid* (8.219–65) which Valerius here echoes.⁴⁵ A few strategic details capped by an epic simile suffice to sustain here the poem's on-going theme of the Argonauts, and Hercules in particular, as liberators,⁴⁶ and the compression creates a surprising and effective variation on epic heroic combat, a fragmented narrative that mirrors verbally the Argonauts' fragmentary experience of the event.

The sense of culminating achievement continues, as the Argonauts' arrival in Colchis immediately follows, with explicit markers of hopes and destiny fulfilled (*optatos ... Colchos*, 'the longed for Colchians', *loca ... debita*, 'the places owed them', 178–80), an impression divinely affirmed by the image of Pallas and Juno parking their chariot, bathed in dazzling light (182–3). Echoes of the Argonauts' gathering before departing Thessaly in Book 1 reinforce this sense of completion. The dramatic sculptures described on Phrixus' tomb and Jason's prayer to Phrixus and Helle (185–9, 194–200) complete the *Argonautica*'s intermittent narrative of their backstory.⁴⁷ Orpheus sang a chapter of it during the departure banquet (1.277–93), and this arrival episode ends with the Argonauts similarly dining by the water, a quiet bookend to the first half of the *Argonautica*.

Conclusion

Horace in the *Ars Poetica* (99–111) stresses the generation of a range of emotions as essential to good poetry.⁴⁸ How did the first readers of the *Argonautica* experience the emotion of its narrative? Did many perhaps surrender themselves to vicarious highs and lows of human feeling, much as a modern reader might enjoy the melodrama of a romance novel, finding therein *katharsis* or feeding an addiction?⁴⁹ For others, were the emotions of the narrative instead

45 Cf. especially *Argonautica* 5.157–69 and *Aen.* 8.233–40. See Hershkowitz (1998b) 75–8 for possible thematic implications of the parallels between Valerius' and Virgil's episodes.

46 On the Hesione episode, see Burck (1976); Hershkowitz (1998b) 72–5.

47 Zissos (2004a) observes in Valerius' segmented version of the backstory a sensibility akin to the visual arts, more overtly referenced in the description of Phrixus' tomb sculptures.

48 Syed (2010) 33–50 surveys ancient views of the impact of poetry on its audience's emotions.

49 Experienced in this way, the *Argonautica* was perhaps not so exclusively 'anti-popular' as Zissos (2004a) 84–5 concludes. Valerius' compressed and sometimes puzzling language might suggest an idiosyncratic, self-involved artist, but a case can be made that he not only invites the close engagement of savvy readers that savour linguistic challenge but

appreciated more intellectually for the rhetorical skill of their representation? In either case, Roman readers found in this *aestus* or ebb and flow of human passions a stimulating sequence of artful language, whose course through the poem modern critics and readers should carefully retrace.⁵⁰

also provides entertaining stimulation for readers who might not catch every verbal nuance.

- 50 The author wishes to thank the editors for their perceptive comments and helpful suggestions.

Authorial Poetics in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Alain Deremetz

Introduction¹

This chapter focuses on authorial poetics, a topic that has been approached by a number of scholars in connection with Valerius Flaccus. A characteristic example of recent research on this topic can be found in Andrew Zissos' introduction to his commentary on Book 1 and particularly in the sections entitled 'self-consciousness' and 'modes of allusion', where the author lists a fascinating catalogue of some of the reflexive devices which, as has been recently emphasised, are found continuously in Valerius' epic poem.²

The concept of authorial poetics that will be employed in this chapter—and that must be differentiated from reconstructions of the poetics of an author by later readers, including the revivals, imitations and diverse influences that can be detected in them—is established on the basis of all the author's references to his own written project and all occasions when he informs his readers about the choices that he makes according to his taste within the established tradition. These choices may be explicit and obvious when the author, moving from narration to comment, seems to write in his own name, or they may be implicit and subtle when, as is often the case, they are veiled within an allegory. The following discussion will focus on allegories, which are by far the most commonly used poetic device in the *Argonautica*, and in particular on the allegories that evoke the poet's position within his literary field and more specifically within the epic genre.

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- 1 Texts and translations used here are adapted from Green (2008) for Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, from Fairclough and Goold (1999) for Virgil's *Aeneid*, from Fitch (2002) for Seneca's tragedies and from Braund (2004) for Juvenal's *Satires*. Translations used for Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* are adapted from Barich (2009), who bases his version on Ehlers' Teubner edition (1980).
 - 2 Zissos (2008) xxxix–xlvi. Examples of such research are Feeney (1991) 322–8; Barchiesi (2001a) 139–40; Zissos (2002); Stover (2003); Zissos (2004b) and (2006a); Heerink (2007) 606–20 and (forthcoming a).

The Proem

Prima deum magnis canimus freta pervia natis
 fatidicamque ratem, Scythici quae Phasidis oras
 ausa sequi mediosque inter iuga concita cursus
 rumpere flammifero tandem consedit Olympo.
 Phoebe, mone, si Cumaeae mihi conscia vatis 5
 stat casta cortina domo, si laurea digna
 fronte viret, tuque o pelagi cui maior aperti
 fama, Caledonius postquam tua carbasa vexit
 Oceanus Phrygios prius indignatus Iulos,
 eripe me populis et habenti nubila terrae, 10
 sancte pater, veterumque fave veneranda canenti
 facta virum: versam proles tua pandit Idumen,
 namque potest, Solymo nigrantem pulvere fratrem
 spargentemque faces et in omni turre furentem.
 ille tibi cultusque deum delubraque genti 15
 instituet, cum iam, genitor, lucebis ab omni
 parte poli neque erit Tyriae Cynosura carinae
 certior aut Graeis Helice servanda magistris.
 seu tu signa dabis seu te duce Graecia mittet
 et Sidon Nilusque rates: nunc nostra serenus 20
 orsa iuves, haec ut Latias vox impleat urbes.

First crossing of the sea I sing, by the gods' | own mighty sons, and the
 prophetic ship | that dared to seek the shores of Scythian Phasis | and
 forge a path between the Clashing Rocks, | to rest at last with heaven's
 fiery stars. | Apollo, guide me, if within my house | unsullied, a holy tripod
 stands in place, | Cumaean Sibyl's intimate, and if | the laurel's fresh upon
 a worthy brow. | And you, whose glory is the greater now | that you have
 opened up the sea to men | since Caledonia's Ocean bore your sails, |
 which scorned till now the Phrygian sons of Iulus, | remove me from
 nations and the world of cloud, | o hallowed Father, and favour him who
 sings | of olden men the deeds that merit awe. | Judaea's fall your son
 recounts in song, | for this is in his power, and how his brother, | black-
 ened by Jerusalem's dust, scattered | burning brands and raged on every
 tower. | For you he'll found a family shrine, good Father, | and worship as
 a god, when from all heaven | your light will shine. Less sure a guide the
 Bear | will be to a Tyrian ship or Greek captains, | who will watch no more
 the polestar, if you | shall be their sign, or if Greece and Nile and Sidon |

will send out ships with you to show the way. | For now, with kindly countenance aid my task | so that this voice may fill the cities of Latium.

(1.1–21)

To begin with, the opening speech of the poet in the proem will be examined in detail. Valerius establishes here a partly original narrative setting, which has attracted the attention of a number of commentators. As I have explained in a recent article, this setting, which establishes the *circumstances* of the narration of the poem, 'should be understood neither as reflecting some element external to the text, a historical event, a ritual setting or real-life situation which pre-existed the production of the text and thus determined it . . . nor as the setting or context within which the poetic performance takes place . . . but, rather, in the same way that literary pragmatics envisages the context of a work of literature, as an element internal to the work itself, that is to say, in the words of Maingueneau, as "the situation through which [this work] presents its enunciation, the enunciation which makes it [the work] and which it [the work] legitimises in return".³ A narrative setting such as this one is generally composed of three elements: the status of the narrators and the listeners evoked, as well as the space and time in which the narration is conceived as taking place. Leaving aside the issue of narrative time, which, to judge from the address to the prince, corresponds clearly to the reign of Vespasian at the time of the taking of Jerusalem by Titus in AD 69–70,⁴ we should limit ourselves to the first two elements. There are five characters in this scene—the poet, Phoebus, Vespasian and his two sons Titus and Domitian—who fulfil three principal functions: a heroic function, a tutelary function and a poetic function. It is interesting that the poet has established a symmetry between the two first sections of the proem, the thematic declaration and the invocation to Phoebus, and the third one, the *laudatio principis*: in mentioning the Argo and its catasterism (and not the quest for the Golden Fleece) as his subject, Valerius establishes a connection with the astral apotheosis of Vespasian and, in doing so, emphasises the symmetry established in the proem between the story of Jason and the biography of Vespasian. In this way, he gives the most important role to Vespasian, who performs two of these functions or even all three.

3 Deremetz (2011b) 293 (translated). The quotation is from Maingueneau (1993) 122 (translated); see also p. 66.

4 The issue of this narrative time should be distinguished from the complex and controversial issue of the time of the composition of the prologue, which is of little interest to my argument here. For this debate see Stover (2012a) 7–26 = (2008), who offers strong arguments in favour of a Vespasianic date.

Vespasian fulfils the same heroic function as Jason, that of having opened up a sea (lines 1 and 7); similarly, he shares with Phoebus the function of supporting the poet in his enterprise.⁵ If we bear in mind the metaphoric function of the voyage,⁶ he also shares the poetic function since, having become a constellation following the example of the Argo, he will guide the ships (19–20) just as he will guide the poet on his poetic journey. The poetic function, in the strict sense of the term, is distributed between the poet, who sings of the deeds of the heroes of the past, and Domitian, who sings of the deeds of a hero of today, his brother Titus.⁷ Jason, Vespasian and Titus all share in the heroic function, and so does the poet: because of the metaphoric dimension of the voyage, the poet is a sort of companion of the Argonauts, like Orpheus.⁸ In this way the poet's work is analogous to the Argo: both the poem and the ship are destined for glory.

Let us turn to the effect that these opening lines, composed with great agility, and most notably the first line, create. As has often been remarked,⁹ these lines subtly combine various intertextual references,¹⁰ the most prominent of which, concerning the genre of the poem, are those of the opening lines of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius and of the *Aeneid*, *prima* taking up Apollonius' ἀρχόμενος, and the syllables *-ma* and *-um* in the second and fourth feet echoing the same syllables placed in the same position in Virgil; *canimus* refers to μνήσομαι and *cano*, and *Scythici quae Phasidis oras* has the same structure as the hemistich *Troiae qui primus ab oris*:

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- 5 The *tuque* of line 7 underlines this association between Phoebus and Vespasian. We can also detect an imitation of the prologue of Virgil's *Georgics*, with Phoebus playing the same role as the gods of agriculture and Vespasian a role similar to that of Caesar Augustus. According to Lefèvre (1971), the proem has three sections like the proem to Virgil's *Georgics*.
 - 6 On the Argonautic voyage as a metaphor for poetic composition, see Davis (1989) 48.
 - 7 The reference to Domitian's decision to celebrate the war of his brother in an epic can be seen as a skilful *recusatio* on the part of Valerius, which justifies his choice of mythological epic. See Nauta (2006) 27–30 and Zissos (2008) 81 for Valerius' *recusatio*.
 - 8 See Hunter (1993) 120–1 and Albis (1996) 43–66 on the metapoetic aspect of the voyage in Apollonius Rhodius.
 - 9 See Zissos (2008) 71–3.
 - 10 Apart from the references to Apollonius and Virgil discussed below, Barchiesi ((2001b) 330–1) sees Valerius as referring to Ovid, *Am.* 2.11.1–3, where the first word is *prima*, an allusion he defines as 'meta-argonautica'; Ovid himself exploits the opening of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius. Davis (1989) also notes echoes of Catullus 64.1–11 and Sen. *Med.* 301–2, and *canimus* (in particular the plural) could perhaps also refer to Lucan 1.2: see Zissos (2004b) 35–6 and (2008) 74.

Prima deum magnis canimus freta pervia natis
fatidicamque ratem, Scythici quae Phasidis oras
 ausa sequi mediosque inter iuga concita cursus
 rumpere flammifero tandem consedit Olympo
Phoebe, mone . . .

First crossing of the sea I sing, by the gods' | own mighty sons, and the
 prophetic ship | that dared to seek the shores of Scythian Phasis | and
 forge a path between the Clashing Rocks, | to rest at last with heaven's
 fiery stars. | Apollo, guide me . . .

(Val. Fl. 1.1–5)

ἀρχόμενος σέο, Φοῖβε, παλαιγενέων κλέα φωτῶν
 μνήσομαι, οἳ Πόντοιο κατὰ στόμα καὶ διὰ πέτρας
 Κυανέας βασιλῆος ἐφημοσύνη Πελῖαο
 χρύσειον μετὰ κῶας ἐύζυγον ἤλασαν Ἀργῶ.

Starting from you, Phoebus, the deeds of those old-time mortals
 I shall relate, who by way of the Black Sea's mouth and through the
 Cobalt-dark rocks, at King Pelias' commandment,
 In search of the Golden Fleece drove tight-thwarted Argo.

(Ap. Rhod. 1.1–4)

arma virumque cano Troiae qui primus ab oris . . .
 Arms and the man I sing, who first from the coasts of Troy . . .
 (Virg. *Aen.* 1.1)

The first line seems exceptionally ambiguous, in particular if it is read in light of the rest of the proem: it serves to establish both the subject of the poem and the *laudatio*, as *deum magnis natis* can *a priori* just as well signify the emperor and his sons as Jason and his Argonauts, and the sea can refer to both the fictional sea that Jason travels across and the real sea sailed over by Vespasian. The indeterminacy of the theme and the characters in this line attracts the attention of readers to the word play and the intertextual references; these points suggest that the plural *canimus* could be read as more than a simple plural of grandeur and rather as including other authorial figures cooperating with the poet, Apollonius Rhodius and Virgil,¹¹ whose poetic voices are in some

11 On Valerius' relationship to Virgil, see e.g. the excellent summary by Liberman (1997) xxxii–xlvi. See also the previous note for the possible allusion to Lucan in *canimus*.

way incorporated into Valerius' poetic voice. In addition to the uncertainty of theme and characters, another element of this indeterminacy can be found in the use of *prima* at the beginning of the opening lines where, at the same time as imitating the opening gesture of Apollonius, Valerius corrects him through recourse to Virgil.¹² *prima*, placed at the beginning of the line, anticipates the substantive *freta* with which it agrees grammatically. The appearance of *freta* is in some way intentionally delayed (unlike in Apollonius, where ἀρχόμενος is juxtaposed with σέο, but as in Virgil, *Ecl.* 6.1–2: *prima* . . . | . . . *Thalia*) and delivers its full semantic charge as if it had been employed absolutely with the value of *primum*, 'for the first time'. The word appears to be a key term that fully encapsulates the author's message:¹³ the epic celebrates and illustrates a beginning. Valerius, as many other Latin poets before him—Virgil, Horace, Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid—leaves us with the impression that the writing of a poem always consists in establishing (or pretending to establish) a new way of writing, in founding a language, inaugurating a genre, and that this is achieved by turning poetic precedents to one's advantage.¹⁴

Unlike most other epic prologues, Valerius Flaccus' prologue seems also to include, in a figurative manner, the space of the narrative delivery of the poem. He speaks of his 'pure abode' (*casta* . . . *domo*, 1.6), in which the poet represents himself, crowned with the laurel that decorates the foreheads of the priests of Apollo and of bards, standing before the tripod of Cumae, which transmits his prophetic knowledge to him. An autobiographical meaning of this description is quite possible, since Valerius could have very well been a member of the college of the *quindecimviri*, who took care of the Sibylline books and whose members each had a tripod in their residence,¹⁵ but these considerations do not exhaust the sense of the line. The reference to a tripod points again towards Apollonius Rhodius and Virgil, the two models implicitly privileged by

12 This imitative relationship (with Apollonius) through transformation (via Virgil) can be considered as the heart of authorial poetics insofar as it is illustrated in action by Valerius. This is in addition to other striking echoes, such as that of Homer (see Zissos (2002)). On the opposition between authorial and reader poetics, see above.

13 A translation following the movement of the text and taking account of the process of reading and of the interpretation of the reader-listener would be: 'For the first time, of the gods, by the great (children), we sing of the sea crossed.'

14 Valerius here also seems to express his originality in comparison with others who have treated the same subject previously, notably Varro Atacensis.

15 A number of writers, such as Stella (*Stat. Silv.* 1.2.176–7) and Tacitus (*Ann.* 11.11), were *quindecimviri*. It is also possible to consider the idea that the tripod evokes a victory during a poetic contest. However, the autobiographic interpretation of this passage has also been contested for a long time: see e.g. Newman (1986) 221.

Valerius in the first two lines. Valerius alludes to the episode of the Sibyl, who, in the prediction that she addresses to Aeneas in *Aeneid* 6, appears as both an inspired prophetess and a poetess, 'mistress of epic style and composition',¹⁶ and who, having become a confidante and accomplice of Valerius (*mihi conscia*, 1.5),¹⁷ transmits to him the Virgilian inheritance of which he becomes the legitimate heir.

However, tripods also appear in Apollonius, where Phoebus entrusts a pair of them to Jason in order to assure him of a favourable voyage:

διοιὺς γὰρ τρίποδας τηλοῦ πόρε Φοῖβος ἄγεσθαι
 Αἰσονίδῃ περόωντι κατὰ χρέος, ὅππότε Πυθῶ
 ἱρὴν πεισόμενος μετεκίαθε τῆσδ' ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς
 ναυτιλίας.

A pair of these tripods Phoebus had given Jason
 to take on that far journey he made perforce, when he came
 to Delphi with questions for Pytho concerning the voyage
 that lay ahead.

(4.529–32)

The first of these was offered to the Hylleans as a reward for helping the Argonauts in finding their route:

... πρὸς δ' αὐτοὶ ἐμηχανώνοντο κέλευθον,
 μισθὸν αἰερόμενοι τρίποδα μέγαν Ἀπόλλωνος.

[The Hylleans] proved friendly, helping them on their way,
 and got for reward an outsize tripod of Apollo.

(4.527–8)

The second was offered on Orpheus' initiative to the indigenous gods of Lake Tritonis so that these gods would inform the Argonauts of the escape route from the lake:

16 See Deremetz (2004) 75–83; in conclusion I claimed that the Virgilian Sibyl 'appears as an authorial representative to whom the author must refer so as to instruct his reader on the narrative organisation of his work, on his models and consequently on the generic conception that his work illustrates and the axiological content that it contains'. In Virgil, the term *cortina* appears at *Aen.* 3.92 (Delos) and at *Aen.* 6.347 (Palinurus).

17 Cf. Virg. *Aen.* 6.66: *praescia venturi*.

... αὐτίκα δ' Ὀρφεὺς
 κέκλετ' Ἀπόλλωνος τρίποδα μέγαν ἔκτοθι νηὸς
 δαίμοσιν ἐγγενέταις νόστῳ ἔπι μείλια θέσθαι.

Then Orpheus abruptly declared they should off-load Apollo's great tripod
 to sweeten the local divinities, win a safe voyage home.
 (4.1547–9)

Consequently, if the mention of the tripod in the residence of the poet can be interpreted as a sort of autobiographical *sphragis*, it also possesses a poetic value in that it shows the poet composing his epic under the double patronage of Virgil, whose Sibyl inspires him, and Apollonius, in whose epic the tripods guaranteed a successful voyage. In short, whichever other authors Valerius alludes to in the proem, it is certainly the patronage of Apollonius, corrected by Virgil, that he invokes.

Pelias as a Poet

Let us now turn to other metapoetic elements that elaborate upon and clarify those contained in the proem. At the beginning of the poem, in his outline of the story, Valerius describes the torments that Pelias suffers in seeing the prediction of the soothsayers realised and evokes the thoughts that motivate Pelias to find the means of destroying his brother's son:

ergo anteire metus iuvenemque extinguere pergit
 Aesonium letique vias ac tempora versat.
 sed neque bella videt Graias neque monstra per urbes
 ulla: Cleonaeo iam tempora clausus hiatu
 Alcides, olim Lernae defensus ab angue
 Arcas et ambobus iam cornua fracta iuvencis.
 ira maris vastique placent discrimina ponti.

35

So Pelias ventures to pre-empt his fear, | and liquidate the man, this son
 of Aeson. | He ponders how and when to cause his death, | but wars or
 monsters can't be found in all | the Grecian towns: Cleonae's lion's maw |
 already wrapped about Alcides' brow, | from Lerna's snake Arcadia long
 ago | was saved, and both bulls' horns already smashed. | He picks up the
 angry sea, the perils met | upon the trackless deep . . .

(1.31–7)

If we compare these lines with their corresponding lines in Apollonius—

αἶψα δὲ τόνγ' ἐσιδὼν ἐφράσσατο, καὶ οἱ ἄεθλον
 ἔντυε ναυτιλίας πολυκηδέος, ὄφρ' ἐνὶ πόντῳ
 ἦε καὶ ἀλλοδαποῖσι μετ' ἀνδράσι νόστον ὀλέσσει

The moment Pelias saw him, he knew, and devised him a trial
 of most perilous seamanship, that in deep waters
 or away among foreign folk he might lose his homecoming
 (1.15–17)

—we notice that they contain the mention, absent in the model, of types of trials and dangers to which Jason can no longer be subjected. While this scene, portraying a character in search of a new means of destroying a rival, is traditional,¹⁸ it also has a meaning from an intertextual¹⁹ and diegetic point of view, as has often been remarked, and, furthermore, from a metapoetic point of view. In terms of intertextuality, the implicit allusion to three of the labours of Hercules invites comparison between Pelias' predicament and the trials described by Juno in the prologue of Seneca's *Hercules Furens*:²⁰

quae bella? quidquid horridum tellus creat
 inimica; quidquid pontus aut aer tulit
 terribile, dirum, pestilens, atrox, ferum,
 fractum atque domitum est . . .
 . . . monstra iam desunt mihi . . .

What warfare? Any fearful thing the hostile earth produced, or sea or air brought forth, however frightening, monstrous, poisonous, dreadful, savage, has been broken and tamed . . . Now there are no monsters left me . . .
 (30–3, 40)

As Gärtner has shown,²¹ this allusion possesses a proleptic value, because Valerius' choice of these three Herculean labours prefigures that of the three major trials that Jason will face in Colchis: the battle against the bulls (7.573–606), the encounter with the serpent (8.54–94) and the Golden Fleece with which, like Hercules, Jason adorns himself (8.121–6).

18 See Zissos (2008) 100.

19 See Zissos (2008) xxxiv–xxxix.

20 See Galli (2007) 59.

21 Gärtner (1994) 66–7; see also Zissos (2008) 101.

If we also consider the fact that Hercules himself will participate in the voyage at the beginning, but will later abandon his comrades, it seems possible to draw a lesson from this scene in metapoetical terms. In seeking a new kind of heroic trial for his rival, Pelias seems to represent a poet searching for a new subject, one that is different from all the traditional and hackneyed subjects, such as the labours of Hercules, but one that to a certain extent encompasses these traditional subjects.²² This device, which consists in the author attributing to a character aims or thoughts that relate to his views on artistic creation, is well known in ancient poetry. In epic, for instance, we sometimes see heroes transforming into poets;²³ as the example of Juno referred to above attests, this phenomenon also features in tragedy. Pelias is thus a sort of 'authorial representative' who delivers a generic message: the achievements of Jason conclude the cycle of epics of the past and inaugurate a new epic tradition of sea voyages.

Generic Positionings

The fact that Valerius is writing a story about Jason that breaks with and emulates epic tradition is emphasised by the hero himself on two occasions: when he reflects on the decorations on the ship's keel and during the prayer that he addresses to Neptune when the *Argo* is put to sea.²⁴ Debra Hershkowitz has drawn attention to the unexpected reaction of Jason before the two scenes admired by the other Argonauts: he remains oblivious of the beauty of the scenes and his thoughts wander back to the ship itself: he wonders whether the ship will be able to withstand storms (1.149–65).²⁵ If we can say that this reaction conveys a denial of the power of images, it seems that the scene contains another message about poetics when considered in relation to the scene in the *Aeneid*, where we see the Sibyl condemn the fascination that the forms chiselled by Daedalus on the gates of the temple of Cumae exercise

22 See also n. 41 below on the gigantomachic imagery used in the boxing match between Pollux and Amycus. The departure of Hercules symbolises both the end of an era and the transition from ancient to new epic (cf. Heerink (forthcoming a)) opened by the entry in the account of the perilous voyage across the sea.

23 See e.g. Bertolini (1988) 145–64 on Homer, Deremetz (2001) *passim* and Kofler (2003) on Virgil.

24 On ekphraseis in the *Argonautica*, see Heerink in this volume.

25 Hershkowitz (1998b) 129–30. On the rich bibliography on this ekphrasis, see Zissos (2008) 152–66.

over Aeneas and his companions.²⁶ Just as the gesture of the Sibyl seems to express the negative judgement of Virgil concerning the epic model that the work of Daedalus portrays—Alexandrian mythological epic—so Jason's indifference again attests to the distance established by Valerius from a second type of epic from the past, celebrating the exploits of Peleus. For Peleus, in spite of the assistance that his wife Thetis could provide, will not be the one who can direct the 'ship-poem' to its destination.

With Jason's prayer to Neptune, a third generic positioning appears in the poem:

ipse ter aequoreo libans carchesia patri
 sic ait Aesonides: 'o qui spumantia nutu
 regna quatis terrasque salo complecteris omnes,
 da veniam! scio me cunctis e gentibus unum
 inlicitas temptare vias hiememque mereri:
 sed non sponte feror nec nunc mihi iungere montes
 mens tamen aut summo deposcere fulmen Olympo.
 ...'

And Aeson's son himself libation pours, | three goblets to the Father of
the Sea, | and makes this prayer: 'O you that by your nod | do shake the
frothy realm and gird all lands | with the briny sea, forgive me. Well I
know | that of all peoples I alone deserve a storm, | because I dare to test
forbidden paths. | But borne against my will, I have no mind | to pile up
mountains, after all, nor make | demands for lightning from Olympus'
peak...'

(1.193-9)

In this passage—which is absent from Apollonius’ narrative—Jason establishes a distinction between his enterprise and a gigantomachy that serves to signify the poet’s rejection of a third subject of the primitive epic genre, which is just as well known and hackneyed as the labours of Hercules or the trials of Peleus (in the battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths, for example). Moreover, as Zissos has rightly remarked,²⁷ by stating that Jason ‘deserves the storm’, we understand that the storm is the central trial of the hero’s sea

26 See Deremetz (1993) 66–7.

27 Zissos (2008) xl and 328 ff.; see also Burck (1978) 9–14.

voyage.²⁸ This is a way for the poet to indicate that it is an inherent topos of such a narrative and therefore of the epic genre of which it forms a part.

The Storm as Generic Topos

The generic norm that sees the tempest as the key episode of the epic reappears in a form somehow sacralised in another passage, and one which is again absent from Apollonius' poem. It concerns Jupiter's reply to Sol, who had asked the supreme god 'not to harm him by opening up the sea for the mortals' (1.525–6):

atque ego curarum repetam decreta mearum.
iam pridem regio quae virginis aequor ad Helles
et Tanai tenus immenso descendit ab Euro
undat equis floretque viris nec tollere contra
ulla pares animos nomenque capessere bellis 540
ausa manus. sic fata locos, sic ipse fovebam.
accelerat sed summa dies Asiamque labantem
linquimus et poscunt iam me sua tempora Grai.
inde meae quercus tripodesque animaeque parentum
hanc pelago misere manum. via facta per undas 545
perque hiemes, Bellona, tibi. nec vellera tantum
indignanda manent propiorque ex virgine rapta
ille dolor, sed—nulla magis sententia menti
fixa meae—veniet Phrygia iam pastor ab Ida,
qui gemitus irasque pares et mutua Graiis 550
dona ferat. quae classe dehinc effusa procorum
bella, quot ad Troiae flentes hiberna Mycenae,
quot procures natosque deum, quae robora cernes
oppetere et magnis Asiam concedere fati!
hinc Danaum de fine sedet gentesque fovebo 555
mox alias.

And so I shall | recount all things my providence decreed. | From long ago
that realm, extending down | to maiden Helle's strait from eastern lands |
so vast, as far as river Tanais, | has teemed with steeds and prospered in its

28 The same lesson can be drawn from the prediction of Mopsus, who evokes the rage of Neptune and the danger that this rage poses to the expedition (1.211–16).

men. | No troop has dared to match its bravery | or win a name in war, so
 much did Fate, | so much did I myself hold dear that place. | But fast the
 final day approaches now, | when tottering Asia I'll forsake, and Greeks |
 demand of me the time that's now their due. | And so my oak trees, proph-
 ets, and forebears' ghosts | have sent this troop to sea: they make a path |
 for you, Bellona, straight through storm and waves. | Not only the Fleece
 will be a source of strife, | or the nearer pain of the maiden snatched
 away, | but soon will come (no purpose of my mind | more firmly fixed
 than this) a shepherd youth | from Phrygian Ida's slope, to bring the
 Greeks | an equal grief and wrath and gifts good as | they gave. What bat-
 tles will you witness then, | when suitors from the fleet have poured
 ashore, | how many winters Mycenae spends in tears | at Troy, how
 many chiefs and sons of gods, | what stalwart men will meet their end,
 and Asia | shall give way to mighty fate. It's then | I am resolved to see the
 Greek demise, | and soon another nation I shall foster.

(1.536–56)

These routes opened to Bellona through the waves and the storms symbolise the new space opened up for the epic genre, of which the *Iliad* (originating from two voyages, that of Paris, the shepherd of Ida, who by abducting Helen avenges the abduction of Medea, and that of the Greeks, who come to take Helen back from Troy) will be part, followed by the *Odyssey* and finally the *Aeneid*, to which Valerius subtly refers by mentioning the other nations (*alias gentes*, 555–6) who will succeed the Danai.

Moreover, in the narrative of the storm immediately following Jupiter's prediction, Valerius pretends to compose a sort of 'inverse' tradition according to which all these epics derive from an original work, whose text—or at any rate what that text could or should have been—he aims to reconstruct through his work. As if illustrating the principle just declared by Jupiter, Valerius does this by merging all earlier epic models, and in particular the *Aeneid*, whose storm scene he follows very closely.²⁹ Although Valerius' epic is chronologically an Aristotelian τέλος, it presents itself as an ἀρχή,³⁰ and at this point we should recall the fact that the first word of the poem is *prima*, a word announcing its inaugural value. In fact, more than a single epic, the *Argonautica* is presented as *the* epic among epics, at the same time a meta- and an archi-epic potentially encompassing all the others. Valerius thus presents the *Argonautica* in relation to the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* by means of a device that Barchiesi

29 See Zissos (2008) 328 for the similar structure of both episodes.

30 Cf. Hinds (1998) 123ff. and his notion of 'do-it-yourself literary tradition'.

Let us finally note that the narrative of the tempest plays a structural role in the *Argonautica*. A storm opens the narrative, a second storm—which arises during the passage through the Cyanaean rocks—is placed at its centre (4.637–702), and a third at the end of the epic.³⁴ The first storm presents a setback for the Argonauts, and the last (8.318–84), which is created by Juno to save the Argonauts from the attack of Absyrtus, is favourable to them. The first illustrates the nature of the dangers faced by the Argonauts, while the last symbolises the end of their trials, as the word *finem*, which ends the description, indicates:³⁵

noctes atque dies vastis mare fluctibus inter
perfurit, expediunt donec Iunonia sese
consilia atque aliquem bello ferat anxia finem.

Day and night the sea's huge billows seethe | between them, until Juno's
plans unfold | and her solicitude brought an end to the war.
(8.382–4)

The Storm as Metaphoric Paradigm³⁶

But if the storm represents the typically epic narrative as defined by Valerius, it also constitutes a dominant metaphoric paradigm that the poet exploits in several other episodes, notably combat and battle scenes, to the point that the two registers join, as is the case when Styrrus dies shrouded by the stormy sea, as if in a shipwreck, while brandishing his sword, as if in the middle of a battle.³⁷

34 Although the end of Book 8 has not come down to us, the average length of the other books suggests that the description of the last storm is situated shortly before the end of the epic: see Nesselrath (1998) 349–50.

35 Two opposed storms also structure the 'Virgilian *Odyssey*' in the *Aeneid*: the first storm, in Book 1, is negative for the epic mission, as it causes a detour via Carthage, while the second one, in Book 5, is positive, as it cancels the detour, making the Trojans return to Sicily and then to Italy, the goal of their voyage. See Deremetz (1994) 151–66.

36 The metaphor of the storm is found at 3.90–1, 6.353–6 and 6.411–12. In the episode where Hercules delivers Hesione from the sea monster (2.503–35), the metaphor is also repeatedly employed.

37 I thank M. Fucecchi for this judicious observation.

The Boxing Match

The first episode that we shall consider in further detail is the boxing match between Pollux and Amycus, the king of the Bebrycians, which symbolises the triumph of civilised art over brutal archaic force.³⁸ In the replay of this episode³⁹ Valerius, recalling Apollonius (2.1–97), but also Theocritus' *Idyll* 22, borrows two images that Apollonius had already exploited:⁴⁰ that of the monster and that of the tempest. Amycus, who like the Cyclops and Virgil's Cacus lives in a cave, between the remains of his victims, is described by Valerius as a monster (4.155, 188) and as a terrifying giant (*gigas*, 4.200), who is in no way human (4.201) and who is compared to the giant Typhoeus facing Bacchus and Pallas.⁴¹ In the course of the first phase of this battle, which is quite similar to the account given by Apollonius, we find a second simile, comparing Pollux and his handling of Amycus' storm-like attack to a skilled captain, managing his ship in a storm:

spumanti qualis in alto
Pliade capta ratis, trepidi quam sola magistri
cura tenet, rapidum ventis certantibus aequor
intemerata secat, Pollux sic providus ictus
servat et Oebalia dubium caput eripit arte.

Like a ship caught up in Pleiads' storm | on white-capped sea, which only
her captain's effort | keeps on course, though he is terrified, | and she cuts
through the rushing sea unscathed | as winds do battle. So Pollux looks
out | for blows before they come and with the skill of | Oebalus snapped
his head away from danger.

(4.268–72)

38 See Schimann (1998) and Deremetz (2011a).

39 For the different descriptions of the fights between Amycus and Pollus, see Stender (1874) 51ff. This type of battle involving *caestus* ('boxing-gloves') appears in a number of epics, most often during funeral games. This is the case in *Iliad* 23, which deals with the funeral of Patroclus, in *Aeneid* 5, which celebrates the anniversary of the death of Anchises, and in *Thebaid* 6, where Statius sings of the funeral of Archemorus.

40 In Apollonius, the first image is found at 2.38–45 (Amycus is compared to Typhoeus and Gaea's offspring) and the second at 2.70–3 (Amycus' attack is likened to a storm, and Pollux is compared to the captain of a ship struggling against the elements).

41 The combat of Pollux against Amycus is analogous to those in which Apollo faces the giants Tityus and Delphinus, but also to those in which Hercules faces monstrous beings (Geryon and Cacus, for example).

The description of the fight is replete with echoes of Virgil—e.g. the battle of Dares and Entellus (*Aen.* 5.362–484), the *cyclopia*⁴² (*Aen.* 3.588–654), the battle of Hercules against Cacus (*Aen.* 8.190–267), the duel between Aeneas and Turnus (*Aen.* 12.697–952)—and is more developed than that of Apollonius. Nevertheless, Valerius is faithful to the message of Apollonius, who turns the battle into a *mise en abyme* of a new epic whose defining topos is the storm, a topos that shows a capacity to integrate material from 'earlier' epics into a new and more accomplished semionarrative model.⁴³ Moreover, an analogous message is conveyed by the catalogue of Argonauts, where, in addition to the five fathers of future heroes of the *Iliad*,⁴⁴ all those who gained honour before the departure of the expedition are present.

The Trials

Even more revealing of the major role that Valerius gives to the metaphor of the sea and its dangers is its recurrent use throughout the description of the trials inflicted upon the hero by Aeetes. When Jason has just heard the conditions imposed by Aeetes, his astonishment and anger are compared to those of a ship's captain who, believing he is arriving at his destination, is carried off course towards the 'cruel Syrtes' (7.81–6).⁴⁵ The metaphor appears again a few lines later, when Jason, in his reply to Aeetes, likens the tyrant and his trials to Pelias and his own expedition: *aliud hic Peliam, alia aequora cerno* ('Another Pelias I see before me, another sea to cross', 7.92). These uses of the metaphor lend themselves to a metapoetic interpretation: Valerius suggests through the mouthpiece of his hero that the episode that will follow is nothing other than a second *Argonautica*, included in the primary narrative, and that such a maritime tale is a kind of semionarrative archetype to which all

42 The assimilation of the fight to a *cyclopia* is suggested by one other element: Aechion, sent by Jason with a group of men, discovers Dymas, who recalls Virgil's Achaemenides in *Aeneid* 3.

43 A good example of this capacity for integration is given by the reductive description of a gigantomachy at the beginning of Book 2 (16–33). Mark Heerink has drawn my attention to one other example of this capacity of integration of the topos: Lucan (in Book 5) depicts Caesar in a storm with symbolic and gigantomachic overtones; see Stover (2012a) 79ff.

44 These are Peleus, father of Achilles; Menoetius, father of Patroclus; Telamon, father of Ajax; Oileus, father of Ajax the Lesser; Nauplius, father of Palamedes. See Zissos (2008) xli. François Ripoll has pointed out to me that the *Argonautica* unites all the representatives of the Hesiodic age of heroes and, through generational continuity and the anthropological unity that it exploits, sets itself at the heart of this age, between the wedding of Thetis and Peleus and the Trojan War.

45 Thanks to Séverine Clément-Tarentino for having drawn my attention to this line.

other types of narrative (in this case the battle against the bulls) can conform. Finally, the metaphor appears twice in the battle with the bulls, firstly when Jason is compared to a chariot exposed to 'snow and Boreas' (7.562–3) and secondly when the bulls, compared to 'two winds having broken their hobbles' (*duo cum pariter ruperunt vincula venti*, 7.569) enter the arena as a 'monstrous whirlwind' (*immani turbine*, 7.571).

But Valerius' foundational epic does not only integrate material from earlier epics; it also encompasses a second epic paradigm, associated with the metaphor of the sea and the storm.⁴⁶ The paradigm is one of *arma*, i.e. war and combat especially with foreign peoples encountered during the voyage. The insertion of this paradigm is remarkable both because of the types of war narrative included and because of the manner in which it is practised by the poet. Valerius depicts two kinds of epic wars. The first kind is illustrated by the war against the inhabitants of Cyzicus,⁴⁷ which is a 'paradoxical' one since, following a terrible mistake—two sides who share common values and above all respect for hospitality (3.17) attack one another—it seems to represent a tragic variant of the *arma*, civil war, recently illustrated by Lucan:⁴⁸ it is said to be 'unspeakable' and 'impious' (*infanda proelia*, 3.14; *impia bella*, 3.30; *nefas*, 3.258), a description that echoes Lucan's *commune nefas* (Luc. 1.6). The second kind of epic war is problematic: although it borrows from numerous sources, the war at Colchis presents a special case that does not fit with any identifiable model.⁴⁹ It is not a Trojan War, although it could be considered a reverse Trojan War, as if it had seen the victory of the Trojans; nor is it a Virgilian war in Latium, although it shares some characteristics with this war, most notably the fighting between 'sister' nations and the fact that it is a kind of civil war,⁵⁰ or entirely a *Thebaid*, a war between enemy brothers, even if the conflict between Aeetes and Perses 'anticipates' the conflict between Eteocles and Polynices. Valerius' war encompasses all these in the sense that it contains all the topoi of war that the epic tradition has represented.

46 See n. 36 above for the metaphor of the storm. For the metaphor of the skilled captain see 3.109–11.

47 It may be possible to see in this episode a reference to the battle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs represented in the ship's decorations (1.140 ff.). See Baier (2001) and (2004) and Zissos (2008) *ad loc.*

48 On the Cyzicus episode as civil war, see e.g. Hull (1979) 406; Burck (1981a) 456; Hardie (1993) 87; McGuire (1997) 108–13; Manuwald (1999) 159; Bernstein (2008) 52 and now also Stover (2012a) 113–50 (more specifically on the Cyzicus episode and Lucan).

49 On models of Valerius, see Fucecchi (1996) and (2006) *passim*.

50 For the war in Colchis as a civil war (as the Virgilian battle in Latium), see e.g. Hershkowitz (1998b) 225–8; Schenk (1999) 213–8, 247–57; Buckley (2010); Stover (2012a) 148–50.

The 'Proem in the Middle'

It is therefore useful to turn to the declaration of the 'proem in the middle', where the poet announces *alios cantus* ('another song', 5.217):

incipe nunc cantus alios, dea, visaque vobis
 Thessalici da bella ducis. non mens mihi, non haec
 ora satis. ventum ad furias infandaque natae
 foedera et horrenda trepidam sub virgine puppem; 220
 impia monstriferis surgunt iam proelia campis.
 ante dolos, ante infidi tamen exsequar astus
 Soligenae falli meriti meritique relinqui,
 inde canens . . .

And now, goddess, begin another song, | of Thessaly's captain tell the
 wars you witnessed. | My heart and voice have not the strength for this. |
 I come to mad passion and a pact past telling | struck with a daughter,
 a maiden to be dreaded, | who caused the ship to shake beneath her. |
 A sacrilegious war now looms on plains | that bring forth monsters; still
 I must first | recount the lies and first the trickery | of Sol's treacherous
 child, himself to be | justly deceived and justly left behind; from there
 I tell my story.

(5.217–24)

The content of this 'other song' that Valerius announces is indeed different from that of the preceding books, as was the case in Virgil's *Aeneid*: *maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo*, | *maius opus moveo* ('Greater is the story that opens before me; greater is the task that I attempt', *Aen.* 7.44–5).⁵¹ It is also different from the corresponding account in Apollonius, who does not describe a war of Colchis, and from what the reader would have expected on the basis of Mopsus' prophecy at the beginning of the epic (1.211–26). But what Valerius makes clear as well once more, on a metapoetical level, is that this song is unlike those that we have already read, i.e. it is new, unpublished and without precedent in earlier literature. Once more the poet emphasises the seminal value of his work.

As was the case in the description of the massacre of the inhabitants of Cyzicus,⁵² the battle scene in Colchis is preceded by an invocation to the

51 On the formula cf. also Virg. *Aen.* 10.163 (= 7.641). See Wijsman (1996) 124 and Spaltenstein (2004a) 442–3.

52 See 3.14–18 and 212–19.

Muses⁵³ that contains the well-known topos of ‘tongues’, in this case ‘one thousand tongues’:⁵⁴

nunc age Rhipaeo quos videris orbe furores,
Musa, mone, quanto Scythiam molimine Perses
concierit, quis fretus equis per bella virisque.
verum ego nec numero memorem nec nomine cunctos
mille vel ora movens.

Come, Muse, tell what madness you have witnessed | in Rhipaeus’ realm,
with what great force | did Perses stir up Scythia, what men, | what horses
he trusts in war. I could not tell | their numbers or names, not with a thou-
sand voices.

(6.33–7)

The battle scene also mentions generic motifs, such as a catalogue of the troops allied to Perses (6.42–167), a teichoskopy, and many other motifs that it would take too long to list.⁵⁵ The epic of Valerius presents itself, then, as containing the principal types of war epic with all their proper components, and suggests that this richness, which results from the synthesis of a rich epic heritage, ought to be read as the original matrix from which all other epic accounts of this type are derived.

By inserting descriptions of wars in his epic of sea voyage, Valerius also seems to draw attention to the (relative) deficiencies of his epic predecessors by giving the example of an ‘ideal’ articulation of two epic paradigms. The *Iliad*, from Valerius’ point of view, is only an epic of *arma*, neglecting the voyage, the *Odyssey* is only an epic of voyage that omits the *arma*,⁵⁶ and the *Aeneid*, which includes both, merely juxtaposes them. Valerius himself integrates the *arma*, which is for him a secondary paradigm, into the voyage, which is the source and first condition of epic worthy of the name. This is perhaps a way to rehabilitate the *Odyssey* and to contest the *communis opinio*, according to which it

53 See Fucecchi (2006) 90–4 on the invocation.

54 While Homer describes ten languages and ten mouths, and Virgil (*Georg.* 2.43; *Aen.* 6.625), Ovid (*Met.* 8.533) and Silius (4.526) have one hundred mouths, Valerius amplifies the image to include one thousand mouths. See also Hinds (1998) 34–47 on this *topos* of the inability of the poet.

55 See Fucecchi (2006) *passim* on these motifs.

56 Although it would be possible to consider the slaughter of the suitors by Odysseus as something equivalent, it does not contain all the thematic components of an epic battle.

is inferior to the *Iliad*: this is for him the epic that most closely approximates the ideal model; in other words, his *Argonautica* is a fully realised *Odyssey*.⁵⁷

Conclusion

With his *Argonautica*, Valerius aimed to compose the facsimile of the foundational epic that will lead the tradition to Homer, Virgil and Ovid,⁵⁸ passing, among others, through Apollonius, the *nostoi* allusively referred to in 1.369–73,⁵⁹ and many other works. One could add that, by this choice, he also wished to break with the fashion of his time. It is, in this regard, useful to return to the words conveyed by Alcimedē to her son who is about to depart:

nate indignos aditure labores,
dividimur; nec ad hos animum componere casus
ante datum, sed bella tibi terrasque timebam . . .

My son, who now embark | on tasks unearned, we take our leave today. |
I could not steel my heart against this chance, | but dreaded wars you'd
fight in distant lands.

(1.320–2)

Her fear is easily explained at the level of the story: Alcimedē dreads the thought of 'dynastic war' rising up against king Pelias.⁶⁰ But when considered in terms of metapoetics, these words could also be interpreted as a statement from the poet to the reader: contrary to the reader's expectations, and the

57 Jean-Christophe Jolivet has pointed out to me that the hierarchical inversion of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is already contained *in nucleo* in the lament of Aeneas, which gives the impression that the storm is a greater trial than the war: *o terque quaterque beati | quis ante ora patrum Troiae sub moenibus altis | contigit oppetere!* ('Oh, thrice, four times blest, whose lot it was to meet death before their father's eyes beneath the lofty walls of Troy!', Virg. *Aen.* 1.97–9); on the superiority of the *Iliad* in relation to the *Odyssey* cf. Ps.-Longinus, *On the Sublime* 9.13; see Jolivet (2012) 10–11.

58 On the Iliadic prolepsis of 2.441–578, see Zissos (2008) xli. For Ovid's version of the Argonautic voyage, see *Met.* 6.720–7.158. But Valerius also deals with the *Aeneid* (and its voyage) as well as the *Iliad* in the *Metamorphoses*.

59 See Zissos (2008) 253.

60 See Stover in this volume on Jason avoiding a 'civil war' in Thessaly.

fashion of his time, the poet will not offer a *Bellum Civile* or a *Theseid*,⁶¹ but, paradoxically, an epic that, in spite of the potential criticism that it is outdated, will reveal itself as resolutely new, surpassing all those that have preceded it.

Was Valerius' message understood and, if so, approved by his contemporaries? We may doubt this if we give credence to Zissos' analysis of Martial's epigram 7.19, which is interpreted as a polemic against the *Argonautica*:⁶²

Fragmentum quod vile putas et inutile lignum,
 haec fuit ignoti prima carina maris.
 quam nec Cyaneae quondam potuere ruinae
 frangere nec Scythici tristior ira freti.
 saecula vicerunt: sed quamvis cesserit annis,
 sanctior est salva parva tabella rate.

5

What you take for a paltry fragment, a useless piece of lumber, was the first keel to sail the unknown sea. What once neither the Cyanean rocks could break nor the grimmer wrath of the Scythian main, the ages have vanquished. But though it has succumbed to the years, the small plank is more venerable than the ship intact.⁶³

Yet does Martial's negative opinion about 'the intact ship', if it is indeed interpreted as such, refer to Valerius? The identity of Flaccus cannot be established definitively, as is the case with the Flaccus of whom Martial sings the highest praise in two other epigrams (1.62, 77). If Valerius is indeed the subject of this passage, the palinode can be explained by the facts that several years separate Martial's contradictory opinions and that Valerius had died when Martial was composing his Book 7, which is usually dated to 92 CE;⁶⁴ this would explain his liberty of judgement, which he would no doubt not have dared to express during Valerius' lifetime. Yet is it also true that Martial is liberal in his palinodes—and the palinode is inherent to the genre of epigram. Similarly, the condemnation of the fashionable subjects of contemporary poetry is inherent

61 This theme was fashionable at the time, as evidenced by Juvenal (1.1–2): *Semper ego auditor tantum? numquamne reponam | vexatus toties rauci Theseide Cordi?* ('Shall I always be stuck in audience? Never retaliate for being tortured so often by hoarse Cordus' *Song of Theseus?*).

62 Zissos (2004c).

63 Translation by Shackleton Bailey (1993).

64 See Liberman (1997) xvii–xviii on the date of his death.

to satire, and this is particularly true of the story of the Golden Fleece, which we can read in Juvenal's first satire:

nota magis nulli domus est sua quam mihi lucus
 Martis, et Aeoliis vicinum rupibus antrum
 Vulcani. quid agant venti, quas torqueat umbras
 Aeacus, unde alius furtivae devehat aurum 10
 pelliculae, quantas iaculetur Monychus ornos,
 Frontonis platani, convulsaque marmora clamant
 semper, et assiduo ruptae lectore columnae.

No one knows his own house better than I know the grove of Mars and the cave of Vulcan near the Aeolian cliffs. What the winds are up to, which ghosts Aeacus is torturing, the origin of the other guy waltzing off with that filched golden mini-fleece, the size of the ash trees hurled by Monychus—this is the continual shriek from Fronto's plane trees and his tormented marble and the columns shattered by the non-stop reciter.

(1.7–13)

Should we think it aimed against Valerius?⁶⁵ In any case, if Martial and Juvenal were indeed critical of the *Argonautica*, their opinion was not necessarily shared by all their contemporaries, as Quintilian's words, written at roughly the same time, reveal (*multum in Valerio Flacco nuper amissimus*—'We have recently lost a great deal in Valerius Flaccus', *Inst.* 10.1.90).⁶⁶

65 Juvenal has indeed been said to react polemically to Valerius: see S. M. Braund (2004), who notes on verses 7–11 of this satire: 'Juvenal's criticism of the triteness of contemporary mythological epic focusses upon the story of the Argonauts, treated by Valerius Flaccus in the previous generation. The grove of Mars was where the Golden Fleece was kept in Colchis. The cave of Vulcan was in the Aeolian (mod. Lipari) islands, to the north of Sicily, although Valerius Flaccus locates it on Lemnos . . . Monychus was a Centaur; the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs was painted on the Argo'; see also Zissos (2006b) 167.

66 I would like to thank Mark Heerink, Marco Fucecchi, Jean-Christophe Jolivet, Ruth Webb and François Ripoll for their close reading of this chapter and for their detailed comments, and in particular Séverine Clément-Tarentino, who accompanied me in reading this great poem.

Valerius Flaccus, Virgil and the Poetics of Ekphrasis

Mark Heerink

Introduction: Ekphrasis as *Mise en Abyme*

When ancient scholars wrote about ekphrasis ('description'), they meant 'a speech that brings the subject matter vividly before the eyes'.¹ This chapter concerns ekphrasis in the more limited, modern use of the term as a literary description of an object or a work of art.² Even more specifically, it will deal with descriptions of works of art in ancient epic, a genre of which ekphrasis constitutes a standard feature ever since Homer's famous description of Achilles' shield in *Iliad* 18.³ This kind of ekphrasis can fulfil several purposes in the narrative in which it features: 'it has been variously treated as mirror of the text, mirror in the text, a mode of specular inversion, a further voice that disrupts or extends the message of the narrative, a prefiguration for that narrative (whether false or true) in its suggestions'.⁴

Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* features two major descriptions of works of art—the pictures on the Argo's keel in Book 1 (130–48) and the engravings on the doors of the temple of Sol in Book 5 (415–54)—which have been studied extensively for their proleptic potential, i.e. as 'a prefiguration for the narrative'. Thus, for example, scholars have argued that the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, depicted on one side of the Argo (130–9), prefigures the marriage between Jason and Medea in Book 8 of the epic,⁵ and that the Centauromachy depicted

1 Webb (2009) 1, 14. For ekphrasis in this ancient sense, and in particular the treatment of the phenomenon in the ancient rhetorical treatises called *Progymnasmata*, see apart from Webb's book e.g. Bartsch (1989) 7–10; Becker (1995) 24–31.

2 For the modern definition of ekphrasis (and its problems), see e.g. Webb (1999); Elsner (2002); Bartsch and Elsner (2007) i.

3 The classic survey of ekphrasis in ancient epic is Friedländer (1912) 1–23.

4 Bartsch and Elsner (2007) i.

5 E.g. Köstlin (1889) 652–3; Adamietz (1976) 11; Newman (1986) 223; von Albrecht (1997) 935; Fuhrer (1998) 17; Baier (2004) 19; Galli (2007) 112; Zissos (2008) 153; Harrison (2013) 218–19. Schmitzer ((1999) 148–9), however, finds Thetis as a prefiguration of Medea problematic. Galli ((2007) 112) also sees the premature death of the son of Peleus and Thetis, Achilles (mentioned in 133), as an external prolepsis to Medea's killing of her children. Harrison ((2013) 218) adds the suggestion that 'Thetis and the Nereids look symbolically to the coming marine voyage'.

on the other side (140–8) foreshadows the war in Colchis in Book 6 between King Aeetes and the Argonauts on the one side and his brother Perses on the other.⁶

Similarly, the scenes on the doors of the temple of Sol have been interpreted as foreshadowing events to come, even beyond the boundaries of Valerius' text. The most obvious example is the last scene (442–54), showing the events in Corinth we know from Greek and Roman tragedy, such as Medea's killing of her own children.⁷

In this chapter, I will study these two major ekphraseis of Valerius as instances of *mise en abyme*, i.e. as 'mirrors in the text', self-reflexive passages commenting on the epic itself.⁸ As a description of a work of art, an ekphrasis is *a priori* very susceptible of interpretation as a *mise en abyme*,⁹ and therefore this is a potentially fruitful approach. Moreover, this kind of interpretation justifies using the term ekphrasis in its modern, limited sense in the first place, for, as Jaś Elsner has recently emphasised, 'self-referential potential' is 'what works of art distinctively offer within ekphrasis—and why there is a strong case ... for isolating the ekphrasis of art as a sub-genre in its own right'.¹⁰

But how do Valerius' two ekphraseis reflect on the entire epic? And in what sense can these two quite different passages be said to have a message in common? I will focus on the common factor between the two descriptions: the Virgilian intertext of *Aeneid* 1. Since the nineteenth century, the enormous influence of Virgil's epic on the *Argonautica* has been viewed in a negative light for a long time. Wilamowitz' harsh characterisation of Valerius as a slavish

6 E.g. Baier (2001) 27–35; Harrison (2013) 218. See also Zissos (2008) 161 for the Centauromachy as foreshadowing the disruption of the wedding of Jason and Medea in Book 8, and Newman (1986) 224 and Parkes (in this volume) for the connection of the episode with the battle between the Argonauts and the Doliones in Book 3.

7 Cf. Harrison (2013) 223 on the 'tragic' feeling of *horror* (455) experienced by the Argonauts. For more on prolepses (and analepses) in this ekphrasis, see e.g. Adamietz (1976) 12; Hershkovitz (1998b) 23; Manuwald (1998) 312–15; Schmitzer (1999) 153–6; Barchiesi (2001a) 137; Harrison (2013) 222–3; and, most extensively, Wedeniwski (2006) 167–78. Lüthje (1971) 222–3 sees the ekphrasis, with its shift from positive to negative, as reflecting the entire *Argonautica* (but see Manuwald (1998) 312 n. 13), while Harrison (2013) 223 sees lines 433–41 as a *mise en abyme* of the epic's plot (see also below).

8 The standard theoretical discussion of *mise en abyme* is Dällenbach (1989), who defines it as (p. 8) 'any aspect enclosed within a work that shows a similarity with the work that contains it'. Dällenbach does not, however, deal with ekphrasis. On ekphrasis and *mise en abyme*, see e.g. Becker (1995) 4–5; Elsner (2002) 3–9.

9 Cf. Elsner (2002) 3.

10 Elsner (2013). Cf. Elsner (2002) 2.

imitator of Virgil is the most famous example of this bias,¹¹ which proved to be so pervasive that most of the few scholars who revealed Valerius' originality vis-à-vis Virgil emphasised that he must have been unaware of this: Valerius wanted to write like Virgil but failed.¹² In recent years, however, Flavian epic in general and Valerius Flaccus in particular have been rehabilitated, and Denis Feeney, Philip Hardie and Andrew Zissos among others have shown how Valerius self-consciously imitates and emulates his Augustan predecessor.¹³ As I will argue, both Valerius' ekphrasis, in quite different ways, metapoetically comment on Valerius' attitude towards one of his two major models, revealing a poetics of inversion.

The Argo

As scholars have noted, the narrative structure of the first book of the *Argonautica* evokes that of *Aeneid* 1.¹⁴ At first sight, this would perhaps suggest that Valerius is 'slavishly following' Virgil, but on closer inspection Valerius actually inverts the structure of the *Aeneid*. Whereas the Virgilian order of events in the first book is (1) storm (50–156)—(2) Jupiter's prophecy (254–96)—(3) ekphrasis of Juno's temple and ensuing banquet with the bard Iopas' song (441–93; 695–756), the order in Book 1 of the *Argonautica* is the other way round: (1) ekphrasis of the Argo's pictures (130–48) and ensuing banquet with Orpheus' song (252–95)¹⁵—(2) Jupiter's prophecy (531–60)—(3) storm

11 Wilamowitz-Möllendorff (1924) 11.165 n. 2: 'Ganz erbärmlich ist... seine sklavische Abhängigkeit von Vergil.'

12 See e.g. Mehmel (1934) 135: 'der revoltiert, womöglich ohne es zu wissen, gegen das Klassische Virgils.' See Barnes (1995) 276–7 for similar examples. For un-Virgilian aspects discerned by scholars in the *Argonautica*, see also Zissos (2004b) 22; Zissos (2008) xxxviii.

13 Feeney (1991) 313–37; Hardie (1993); Zissos (2002); (2004b); (2006a). See also Ganiban in this volume and Heerink (forthcoming a), from which this paragraph is derived.

14 Von Albrecht (1997) 935. For a more detailed analysis of the parallels between *Argonautica* 1 and *Aeneid* 1, see Galli (2005b); (2007) 19–23.

15 The structural parallel between the end of Virgil's banquet proper, which coincides with the end of Book 1, after which Book 2 will start with famous lines introducing Aeneas' narrative (*Aen.* 2.1–2: *conticuere omnes intentique ora tenebant* | *inde toro pater Aeneas sic orsus ab alto*, 'They all fell silent, gazing at Father Aeneas, and he began to speak from his raised couch'), and Valerius' banquet seems to be reinforced by a verbal allusion to Virgil at the end of Valerius' banquet, when all the Argonauts except Jason fall asleep after Orpheus' song: Val. Fl. 1.294–5: *iamque mero ludoque modus positique quietis* | *conticuere toris*, 'And now there is an end to wine and festivity; outstretched upon quiet couches, the

(574–692). These inversions of Virgil also inform Valerius' ekphrasis of the Argo in particular, and appear to have a metapoetical significance.

Scholars have noted that Valerius' description of the pictures on the Argo brings to mind Virgil's ekphrasis of the murals in the Carthaginian temple of Juno in *Aeneid* 1 (441–93).¹⁶ In fact, an intertextual link between the two ekphraseis is already anticipated by Valerius in the passage that immediately precedes the ekphrasis and is closely connected to it: the description of the Argo's construction. As the opening lines show, this scene is seen through the eyes of Juno, who has just finished a speech in which she expressed her hatred of Hercules, now turning her attention to the building site in Thessaly (1.113–19):

dixit et Haemonias oculos detorquet ad undas.
fervere cuncta virum coetu.

She [Juno] spoke, and then deflected her gaze to the Haemonian shore.
There she discerns all astir with the concourse of men.¹⁷

Val. Fl. 1.120–1

The first line of the description of the Argo's construction, denoting the activity of the builders (*fervere*, 121), alludes to the last line of the scene describing the building of Dido's Carthage in *Aeneid* 1 (423–36), in which the builders are compared to bees: *fervet opus redolentque thymo fragrantia mella* ('The hive seethes with activity and the fragrance of honey flavoured with thyme is everywhere', *Aen.* 1.436). Furthermore, as in the *Argonautica*, the Virgilian building scene immediately precedes the ekphrasis, of Juno's temple.

The striking presence of Juno also points in the direction of the *Aeneid*. Valerius' Juno is always in the background as the focaliser of both the Argo's

men have grown still.' With the two words in bold Valerius even seems to reproduce the excessive alliteration of the *t* in Virgil's two lines. Could this allusion also be interpreted as an inversion of Virgil (Orpheus' audience falls asleep while Virgil's, by contrast, gets ready to listen to Aeneas)? Or is a pun intended here, exploiting the double meaning of the verb *conticescere* as both 'cease to talk' and 'to fall asleep' (see *OLD* s.v. 1), with Valerius suggesting that, as in the *Argonautica*, everyone in Aeneas' audience has fallen asleep even before he begins to speak, due to all the drinking and listening to Orpheus and Iopas respectively?

16 E.g. Galli (2007) 109–10 (*ad* 1.129–48); Harrison (2013) 218.

17 Passages from Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* are quoted from the edition of Ehlers (1980); translations are by Barich (2009). In the case of Book 1, however, text and translation are taken from Zissos (2008). The other translations used (and sometimes slightly adapted) are the following: Ap. Rhod.: Race (2008); Ov. *Met.*: Hill (1999); Virg. *Aen.*: D. West (1991).

construction scene and the ensuing ekphrasis. Similarly, the reader of Virgil's ekphrasis has to bear in mind that Aeneas is watching scenes in a temple dedicated to this archenemy of his people. This is even one of the reasons why Aeneas' subjective reading of the murals, as showing pity for the Trojan cause, can be considered a mistake.¹⁸ Valerius' evocation of the Virgilian Juno is reinforced by the fact that Juno has just finished her hateful speech against Hercules, which 'signals an unmistakable imitation of Juno's first intervention in the *Aeneid*'.¹⁹ At the same time, however, this speech emphasises the crucial difference between Virgil's and Valerius' Juno: whereas the goddess opposes the protagonist and his epic mission in the *Aeneid*, she supports Jason and his quest.²⁰ So another significant inversion of the *Aeneid* immediately precedes Valerius' ekphrasis.

In fact, allusions to *Aeneid* 1 not only introduce but also frame Valerius' ekphrasis, for Jason's reaction to what he sees clearly evokes Aeneas' reaction to the Carthaginian murals:

nec,²¹ quamquam **miranda** viris, stupet Aesone natus,
 et secum: 'heu miseros nostrum natosque patresque! 150
 hacine nos animae faciles rate nubila contra
 mittimur? in solum nunc saeviet Aesona pontus?
 non iuvenem in casus eademque pericula Acastum
 abripiam? invisae Pelias freta tuta carinae
 optet et exoret nostris cum matribus undas.' 155

But, though the scenes are wondrous for the heroes to behold, the son of Aeson marvels not; and thus he thinks to himself: 'Poor wretches, those among us who are sons and fathers! Is it in this, this vessel that we gullible souls are sent against the cloud-filled skies? Shall the sea rage against Aeson alone? Shall I not snatch away young Acastus into the same

18 See e.g. Barchiesi (1999) 336 (cf. Barchiesi (1997) 277), also for further discussion and bibliography.

19 Zissos (2002) 77, who also points to Valerius' metapoetical 'acknowledgement of belatedness' in saying that Juno is 'making anew her habitual complaints' (*solitosque novat Saturnia questus*, Val. Fl. 1.112). Cf. Zissos (2008) 146 (*ad loc.*)

20 Cf. Heerink (forthcoming a) on Valerius' Hylas episode, where Juno takes up her 'Virgilian' role against Hercules to remove the hero from the expedition and the epic.

21 With Liberman (1997) and Zissos (2008) I read Pius' *nec* here, although the MSS L, V and S read *haec* here, which would reinforce Valerius' allusion to *Aen.* 1.494 (see below).

fortunes and perils? Then let Pelias hope for a safe sea for the hated ship,
and let him strive with our mothers to supplicate the waves.'

(Val. Fl. 1.149–55)

haec dum Dardanio Aeneae **miranda** videntur,
dum **stupet** obtutuque haeret defixus in uno,
regina ad templum, forma pulcherrima Dido,
incessit, magna iuvenum stipante caterva.

While Trojan Aeneas stood gazing, rooted to the spot and lost in amazement at what he saw, Queen Dido in all her beauty arrived at the temple with a great crowd of warriors around her.

(*Aen.* 1.494–7)

In the *Aeneid*, the effect of the murals on Aeneas is that he feels reassured that he has arrived at a civilised place, inhabited by people who have sympathy for the Trojan cause and who are not to be feared.²² Of particular interest in this respect is the last scene viewed by Aeneas:

ducit Amazonidum lunatis agmina peltis
Penthesilea furens mediisque in milibus ardet,
aurea subnectens exsertae cingula mammae
bellatrix, audetque viris concurrere virgo.

The Amazons were there in their thousands with crescent shields and their lead Penthesilea in the middle of her army, ablaze with passion for war. There, showing her naked breast supported by a band of gold, was the warrior maiden, daring to clash with men in battle.

(*Aen.* 1.490–3)

While Aeneas is watching his former ally, the Amazon queen Penthesilea, on the battlefield, Dido enters the scene and interrupts Aeneas' viewing (494–7, quoted above). A link is created between the two characters by the narrator,

²² Incidentally, Aeneas had already inferred that the Carthaginians are sympathetic to the Trojan cause before viewing the murals, as witnessed by his famous words: *sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi; | sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt. | solve metus; feret haec aliquam tibi fama salutem* ('Here too there is just reward for merit, there are tears for suffering and men's hearts are touched by what man has to bear. Forget your fears. We are known here. This will give you some hope for the future', *Aen.* 1.461–3).

by means of this associative transition from one *regina* to another, but also by the focaliser Aeneas, who interprets Dido as a Penthesilea, as it were, and thus as an ally.²³

How different is the situation in the *Argonautica*, where Jason's reaction is not as optimistic as Aeneas', as he wonders whether the Argo will be up to the task (151–2) and worries about his father Aeson, who will have to stay behind alone (152). Similar to the situation in Virgil's ekphrasis, Jason's worries concerning his father seem to be provoked by Aeson's presence in the final picture on the keel, depicting the battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs (*hic ense furens agnoscitur Aeson*, 'and here is discerned Aeson, raging with his sword', 144). Although, as mentioned earlier, the ekphrasis of the Argo is seen through Juno's eyes, Jason can be considered retrospectively as a focaliser as well, just like Aeneas. This is reinforced by the narrator, who, immediately after the ekphrasis and the scene with Aeson, denotes Jason (only here in the *Argonautica*) as 'Aeson's son' (*Aesone natus*, 149).²⁴ Whereas the Virgilian ekphrasis has the effect of reassuring Aeneas with regard to the local ruler (Dido), Valerius' ekphrasis, by contrast, causes Jason to worry about Pelias. As this tyrant threatens to kill his own brother Aeson, thus forcing him to commit suicide, at the end of Book 1, Jason's worries are wholly justified. So again we are dealing with an inversion of the *Aeneid*.

When we turn to the ekphrasis itself, the paintings on the Argo, these inversions of the *Aeneid* seem to get programmatic significance. In fact, Valerius not so much inverts as completely ignores Virgil's epic. At first sight this is perhaps not very surprising, for, as far as we know, Valerius had no direct ancient model for this type of ekphrasis, and so the passage is highly original.²⁵ On the other hand, Valerius clearly *does* have models for his ekphrasis, and the absence of the *Aeneid* among them is all the more striking because of the Virgilian build-up to the passage.

The first half of the ekphrasis consists of two complementary scenes painted on one side of the Argo, which mainly evoke Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

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- 23 Cf. Conte (1986) 194–5 on Penthesilea and Dido. For the way in which Penthesilea (and Achilles, who loves but kills her) foreshadows Dido (and her tragic love affair with Aeneas), see e.g. Pöschl (1966) 147. For Penthesilea as a prefiguration of Camilla in the second half of the *Aeneid*, see e.g. Gransden (1984) 186–8.
- 24 Cf. Zissos (2008) 168: '*Aesone natus*, an Ovidian periphrasis... found only here in *Arg.*, creates an emphatic effect with the nearby paternal iterations 144 *Aeson* and 152 *Aesona*.'
- 25 E.g. Zissos (2008) 153: 'VF uniquely ascribes hull paintings to Argo, and this is the only extant example of such decorations as the subject for an ekphrasis.'

hic insperatos Tyrrheni tergore piscis 130
 Peleos in thalamos vehitur **Thetis**; aequora **dolphin**
 corripit, <ipsa> **sedet** deiecta in lumina palla
nec Iove maiorem nasci suspirat Achillem.
 hanc Panope Dotoque soror laetataque fluctu
 prosequitur nudis pariter Galatea lacertis 135
 antra petens; Siculo revocat de litore Cyclops.
 contra ignis viridique torus de fronde dapesque
 vinaque et aequoreos inter cum coniuge divos
 Aeacides pulsatque chelyn post pocula Chiron.

On this side Thetis is borne on the back of a Tyrrhenian fish to the unwanted marriage-chamber of Peleus; the dolphin drives through the water. She herself sits upon it, a veil cast over her eyes, and sighs that Achilles will not be born greater than Jupiter. Accompanying her are Panope, her sister Doto, and bare-armed Galatea, joyful in the waves, making for the cave; from the Sicilian shore Cyclops calls back his beloved. Opposite is a fire, a bed of green leaves, a banquet, wine, and the son of Aeacus with his bride among the water deities; after the distribution of wine-cups, Chiron strums the lyre.

(Val. Fl. 1.130–9)

As Andrew Zissos has shown, '[t]he initial treatment of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis is systematically indebted to *Met.* 11.221–65, in which Peleus rapes Thetis in a cave'.²⁶ The picture of the unhappy Thetis, for instance, carried on a dolphin to her wedding, clearly alludes to the *Metamorphoses*.²⁷

est specus in medio (natura factus an arte
 ambiguum, magis arte tamen), quo saepe venire
 frenato **dolphine sedens**, **Theti**, nuda solebas.

There is a grotto in the middle of it [a myrtle wood] (whether made by nature or by art is uncertain, but more probably by art) where, Thetis, you often used to go sitting naked on a bridled dolphin.

(*Met.* 11.235–7)

²⁶ Zissos (2008) 153–4. Cf. Zissos (2002) 94, with nn. 99 and 100 listing the verbal parallels.

²⁷ Another allusion to Ovid follows in the next line: Thetis' sigh that 'Achilles will not be born greater than Jupiter' obviously foreshadows the Trojan War and thus the *Iliad*, but the wording more specifically evokes *Metamorphoses* 11: cf. Zissos (2002) 94.

A nice touch of Valerius here is that he has turned into an ekphrasis what already seemed like one in the *Metamorphoses* (especially retrospectively, after reading Valerius' passage), as Ovid's Thetis is depicted in a cave which seems natural but is in fact probably (as Ovid has it) made by an artist.

This kind of self-conscious, learned, 'Alexandrian' allusion with a twist brings to mind what Valerius does to the other major model for his ekphrasis: Catullus 64. This epyllion puts its reader on the wrong track twice. Initially, Catullus seems to imitate Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* and to start a full-blown epic on the Argo,²⁸ but Catullus' potential *Argonautica* soon turns into a poem about the wedding of Peleus and Thetis.²⁹ Already in line 50, however, the poem metamorphoses again, as the poet famously interrupts his narrative with the ekphrasis of the coverlet of the bridal bed, which depicts the story of Ariadne and takes up half of the entire poem (50–264).³⁰ Interestingly, Valerius reverses Catullus' ekphrastic practice 'by making the wedding festivities ecphrastic subject rather than frame',³¹ and returns to Apollonius by making the theme of the *Argonautica* the frame and subject of his epic.

Apollonius, Catullus, Ovid and Valerius seem to have created their own literary history of the story of Peleus and Thetis, in which these poets with Alexandrian and neoteric, i.e. 'Callimachean', affiliations react to and metamorphose each others' versions in typically self-conscious and learned fashion.³² Valerius' choice of this topic can also be called Callimachean, as a story set before the Trojan War.³³ Callimachean poets such as Apollonius and

28 See esp. DeBrohun (2007) on Catullus 64's interaction with and reworking of Apollonius' *Argonautica* (with p. 293 for earlier bibliography).

29 DeBrohun (2007) 295: 'Catullus marks the Peleus and Thetis story—told in a narrative digression in book 4 of Apollonius' poem—as the particular aspect of his predecessor's epic with which he means to interfere.'

30 Cf. Gaisser (1995) 585: 'Catullus has thus rewritten the *Argonautica* as a miniature epyllion with the meeting of Peleus and Thetis as the insert, and he has done so at the beginning of a long epyllion in which the marriage of Peleus and Thetis will provide the frame for another inset.'

31 Zissos (2008) 155 (on Val. Fl. 1.130–9).

32 Callimachus is the most famous and explicit representative of the new, Hellenistic, poetic avant-garde, whose poetics I will label 'Callimachean', although the poet himself is not necessarily the first to have expressed these ideas, which may very well go back to Philotas of Cos, the poet, scholar and tutor of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who flourished a generation before Apollonius, Callimachus and Theocritus.

33 As Valerius emphasises in his ekphrasis (133), Achilles has not even been born yet. Incidentally, Achilles appears in Valerius' narrative proper, later in Book 1 (255–70), in typically Hellenistic fashion as a child and thus as a 'belated prequel' (see below) to Homer's Achilles.

Theocritus characteristically bypassed direct imitation of Homer—contrary to the poets of the Epic Cycle, so detested by Callimachus (‘Ἐχθαίρω τὸ ποίημα τὸ κυκλικόν, ‘I hate the cyclic poem/recycled poetry’, *Epigr.* 28.1 Pf.)³⁴—and thus found a space for originality. In this way, for instance, Apollonius’ choice of the Argonautic myth as the subject for his Callimachean epic³⁵ can be explained, i.e. as a ‘belated prequel’,³⁶ set a generation before Homer’s epic. Similarly, Theocritus’ *Idyll* 11 depicts Polyphemus as a young man (and bucolic poet of sorts) in love with the nymph Galatea, and not as the well-known brute from the *Odyssey*.³⁷ In fact, this poem of Theocritus, as well as its imitation by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (13.750–897),³⁸ is also alluded to by Valerius in the Thetis scene in the ekphrasis, for Galatea is one of the three nymphs accompanying Thetis on the way to her wedding, while she is being called back by the Cyclops (*revocat . . . Cyclops*, Val. Fl. 1.136), who can be imagined as singing the song he repeatedly sings from the shore in Theocritus’ poem. Valerius also marks his literary debt to these poems by using the verb *revocare*, which metapoetically comments on the ‘process of replicating what has already been said/written’.³⁹

The Construction of the Argo

So in his ekphrasis of this painting on the Argo, Valerius seems to associate himself with Apollonius’ *Argonautica*, Catullus 64 and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and their Callimachean poetics.⁴⁰ This Callimachean agenda of Valerius is

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- 34 The line contains a pun on the double meaning of κυκλικός as both ‘Cyclic’ (as belonging to the Epic Cycle) and ‘circular’, and thus metaphorically ‘commonplace’ and, more pejoratively, ‘hackneyed’; hence Nisetich’s (2001) translation ‘recycled’. Cf. e.g. Asper (1997) 56, n. 140: ‘κυκλικός changiert wahrscheinlich bewußt zwischen den Bedeutungen “kurrent = abgegriffen” und “zum epischen Kyklos gehörig.”’ On Callimachus and his attitude towards Homer and the Epic Cycle, see e.g. Heerink (2012) 47–50.
- 35 For Apollonius’ *Argonautica* as an epic with Callimachean affiliations, see e.g. DeForest (1994) and Heerink (forthcoming b).
- 36 I have borrowed these words from Zissos (2002) 94, who applies them to Theocritus’ and Ovid’s use of Homer’s Polyphemus (see below).
- 37 For this Hellenistic programme of what could be called ‘rejuvenation’, see e.g. Radke (2007). For Callimachus’ (*Aet.* fr. 1.6) and Theocritus’ (*Id.* 1.45–54, in an ekphrasis) poetical personae as children, see esp. Stephens (2002/3).
- 38 For Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as a Callimachean (and in particular elegiac) epic, see e.g. Knox (1986); Hinds (1987).
- 39 Barchiesi (2001a) 188 n. 39, on *reclamat* in Valerius’ Hylas episode (Val. Fl. 3.596), which alludes to *Ecl.* 6.43–4, lines that also deal with Hylas and feature the same verb (*clamasent*, 44). See also Wills (1996) 30–1 on ‘external markers’ for allusion.
- 40 I have argued elsewhere that Valerius’ Hylas episode can be read as a Callimachean/Ovidian reaction to the *Aeneid* (Heerink forthcoming a) and that Orpheus and his

reinforced, or rather introduced, by the scene that immediately precedes the ekphrasis and is closely connected to it. There the building of the Argo by Argus with the help of Minerva is described, seen through the eyes of Juno (as we have already seen), who has just finished a hateful speech about Hercules (1.113–19):

dixit et Haemonias oculos detorquet ad undas. 120
 fervere cuncta virum coetu, simul undique cernit
delatum nemus et docta resonare bipenni
 litora. iam pinus **gracili** dissolvere lamna
 Thespiaden iungique latus lentoque sequaces
 molliri videt igne trabes remisque paratis 125
 Pallada velifero **quaerentem** bracchia malo.
 constitit ut, longo moles non pervia ponto,
 puppis, et ut **tenues** subiere latentia cerae
 lumina, picturae varios superaddit honores.

She [Juno] spoke, and then deflected her gaze to the Haemonian shore. There she discerns all astir with the concourse of men and, at the same moment, the forest brought all down on all sides, and the shores resounding to a skilled axe. And now she sees the Thespian [Argus] splitting the pines with a thin saw, and the sides of the vessel being joined, and the yielding planks being softened over a slow flame; now the oars are ready and she sees Pallas seeking a yard arm for the sail-bearing mast. When the ship stood complete, a massive bulk waterproofed for a long voyage, and when supple wax had sunk into the hidden gaps, Argus added to the surface varied adornments of painting.

(Val. Fl. 1.120–9)

Notoriously, Valerius' main narrative model for his epic, Apollonius, at the beginning of his *Argonautica*, refuses to describe the building of the Argo.⁴¹

Callimachean/Ovidian songs can be seen as reflecting Valerius and his epic (Heerink (2013)). Cf. McNelis (2007), who argues that Statius' *Thebaid* employs Callimachean imagery to distance itself from the *Aeneid*.

41 Ap. Rhod. 1.18–21: νῆα μὲν οὖν οἱ πρόσθεν ἔτι κλείουσιν ἀοιδοὶ | Ἄργον Ἀθηναίης καμέειν ὑποθημοσύνησιν. | νῦν δ' ἄν ἐγὼ γενεήν τε καὶ οὖνομα μυθησαίμην | ἡρώων ('As for the ship, the songs of former bards still tell how Argus built it according to Athena's instructions. But now I wish to relate the lineage and names of the heroes'). Cf. Clauss (1993) 20, who speaks of a *refutatio* by Apollonius.

As Jacky Murray has shown, however, Apollonius does in fact describe the various phases of the building process in dispersed fragments throughout his epic, which taken together tell the complete story of the construction. In this way, Apollonius has used the Argo and its construction as metapoetical metaphors for his own poem and its writing process: the 'Argo' is being built while the poem progresses.⁴² Valerius seems to make explicit what was below the surface in his Hellenistic model. Consequently, he emerges as a sharp reader of his model and, in fact, an equally learned poet.⁴³ Furthermore, the expectation is raised that Valerius' description of the building of the Argo can also be read metapoetically, as reflecting Valerius' epic. In fact, Tim Stover has recently interpreted the scene precisely in this way, as an expression of Valerius' 'erudition and stylistic exquisiteness characteristically associated with Alexandrian poetry'.⁴⁴ For instance, the axe with which the timber for the Argo is cut down is 'learned' (*docta* . . . *bipenni*, 122), the saw with which the trees are made into planks is 'thin' (*gracili* . . . *lamna*, 123), and the wax used to make the keel waterproof is 'soft' (*tenuis* . . . *cerae*, 128).⁴⁵ The terms *gracilis* and *tenuis* (translations of λεπτός and λεπταλέος) are 'well-known hallmarks of Callimachean aesthetics . . . as construed by Roman poets'.⁴⁶

As in the ensuing ekphrasis, Valerius' Alexandrian learnedness is also apparent from the way he metapoetically comments on his intertextual technique. As Tim Stover has argued, Valerius exploits the well-known metaphor of 'wood' for (poetic) subject matter when he describes the felling of the forest (*delatum*

42 Murray (2005). Zissos (2008) 150 (on Val. Fl. 1.121–9) conveniently lists the passages where Apollonius mentions the building of the Argo: 1.111–2, 526–7, 721–4, 2.1187–9, 3.340–2, 4.580–3.

43 Zissos (2002) 93 (cf. Barchiesi (2001a) 137) reads Valerius' gesture here vis-à-vis Apollonius differently, as 'an inversion of Apollonius's narrative approach. Valerius has reversed Apollonius' artistic priorities, thereby making a forceful statement of independence from his principal narrative model.'

44 Stover (2010) 643. Cf. Tzounakas (2012), who complements Stover's findings, and Davis (1989) 48, who already argued that Valerius' Argo in general symbolizes his own epic: 'The myth of the Argo is the subject of the narrative of the epic; Argo is the major theme. As a ship she also is the symbol of the poet's creative process of composition and its result, the poem itself (a common metaphor in Roman poetry): For the related metaphor of sailing for the writing of epic poetry, see e.g. Harrison (2007).

45 Stover (2010) 642–4.

46 Stover (2010) 643. See e.g. Call. *Aet.* fr. 1.21–4 Pf. (Μοῦσαν . . . λεπταλέην, 'slender Muse'); *Epigr.* 27.3–4 Pf. (χαίρετε λεπταὶ | ῥήσιες, 'hail, subtle words'). See esp. Asper (1997) 156–89 for Callimachus' use of this poetological metaphor. For the Latin translations of λεπτός (*gracilis* and *tenuis*), see also e.g. Harder (2012) on *Aet.* fr. 1.24 (who also discusses 'the etymologically related *lepidus*'). Cf. Stover (2010) 643.

nemus, 122), which metaphorically represents the poetic process of *inventio*, i.e. Valerius' looking for material suitable for his epic; *quaerentem* ('seeking') a few lines later (126) reinforces this interpretation.⁴⁷ When Valerius, a few words later in the same line, writes that Juno saw 'the shores resounding to a skilled axe' (*docta resonare bipenni*), he seems to underline the Callimachean learnedness expressed by these words (as discussed above) by using the verb *resonare*, which, like *revocat* in the ekphrasis (136), tropes Valerius' literary debt and affiliation in the construction of his *Argo/Argonautica*.⁴⁸ One thinks here in first instance of Apollonius, to whose epic Valerius' construction scene alludes, as we have just seen, but Valerius credits another model as well in a closely connected passage a few lines earlier, which has already told about the felling of the forest for timber:

in moenia pernix
Thespiaca ad carum Tritonia devolat Argum:
moliri hunc puppem iubet et **demittere ferro**
robora, Peliacas et iam comes exit in umbras.

Tritonia flies down quickly to the Thespian walls and to her dear Argus. She orders him to build a ship and to hew down timber with an axe. And now accompanying him she goes forth into Pelion's shady forests.

(Val. Fl. 1.92–5)

demittere ferro | *robora* (94–5) here echoes *delatum nemus* . . . *bipenni* (122) in the later passage, and the phrase can be equally interpreted metapoetically. In this earlier passage, however, Valerius, as in the ekphrasis, identifies as his

47 Stover (2010) 642, referring to Masters (1992) 27 on Lucan 3.399–452 (where a sacred grove is desecrated and 'deforestation becomes a metaphor for the plundering of poetic material from another source') and Hinds (1998) 13 on *Aen.* 6.179–82, where 'poetic material from the *Aeneid*'s archaic predecessor, the *Annales*, is figured as a harvest of mighty timber from an old-growth forest', through activation of the metaphorical meaning of *silva* as '(poetic) subject matter' in the sentence *itur in antiquam silvam* ('Into an ancient forest goes their way', *Aen.* 6.179, Hinds' translation). See e.g. Heerink (forthcoming b) for more examples of metapoetical play with *silva* and its Greek equivalent ὕλη. Incidentally, Tzounakas (2012) 164 also reads *undique*, 'from all sides (of the forest)', but also 'from every source' (*OLD* s.v. 3b), metapoetically, as implying that 'the poetic material of Valerius Flaccus has been drawn from everywhere'.

48 See Tzounakas (2012) 164. Cf. *Ecl.* 6.43–4, where the verb *sonare* both triggers and describes an allusion to Theocr. *Id.* 13.58–60. Stover (2010) 643, however, interprets the verb differently, as referring symbolically to 'the sound of music'.

model Catullus 64, and more specifically its ‘mini-*Argonautica*’ (1–24), by reusing Catullus’ coinage *Peliaco* (‘from Mt Pelion’), the poem’s first word.⁴⁹ In fact, Valerius speaks of *Peliacas* . . . *umbras* (‘Pelion’s shadows’), and he thus employs another well-known metaphor to express his relationship to Catullus’ epyllion: Valerius is writing in the shadow of Catullus.⁵⁰

So whereas line 122 evokes the building of Carthage in *Aeneid* 1 (*fervere ~ fervet opus*, *Aen.* 1.436) and raises the expectation that the ensuing ekphrasis will be modelled on Virgil’s, Valerius immediately thwarts this expectation by completely ignoring the *Aeneid* in what follows. As the ekphrasis of the Argo (including the construction scene) clearly functions as a *mise en abyme*, reflecting the epic’s poetics, this is very striking indeed. Instead, Valerius associates himself with Callimachean works such as Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, a poem that is well-known for being ‘both a challenge as well as a response to the *Aeneid*’, most clearly of course in its ‘little *Aeneid*’ (*Ov. Met.* 13.623–14.582).⁵¹ It seems that Valerius reacts to the *Aeneid* in a similar way, which would explain his affiliation with ‘Callimacheanism’, as Valerius appears to deal with Virgil’s *Aeneid* as Apollonius had dealt with Homeric epic. Interestingly, Valerius here adopts a strategy of Virgil himself, who had described his relationship to Homer in Callimachean terms in his ekphrasis in *Aeneid* 1:

namque sub ingenti lustrat dum singula templo,
 reginam opperiens, dum, quae fortuna sit urbi,
 artificumque manus inter se operumque laborem 455
 miratur, videt Iliacas **ex ordine** pugnas
 bellaque iam fama totum **vulgata per orbem**,
 Atridas Priamumque et saevum ambobus Achillem.

49 Stover (2010) 644–5, who also sees Valerius’ ‘lexical innovation’ *Thespiaca* (93) as pointing to Catullus 64 and its coinage *Peliaco*. Incidentally, the doubling of the construction of the Argo seems to underline *resonare* and trope the allusion to Catullus 64 as well. Cf. Hinds (1998) 6–8 on the echoing lines in Ovid’s Narcissus episode (*Met.* 3.353, 355), which describe (and activate) the allusion to echoing lines in Catullus 62, both 42 and 44, and 53 and 55: ‘echo as the trope of mannered repetition, within texts and between texts’.

50 Cf. the programmatic beginning of *Eclogue* 1, where Virgil evokes his main model Theocritus by several means (see e.g. Hunter (2006) 115–19) on the allusions to *Id.* 1), and where Meliboeus’ observation that Tityrus (Virgil’s alter ego) is ‘relaxed in the shade’ (*lentos in umbra*, 4) underlines the poet’s belatedness vis-à-vis Theocritus.

51 Papaioannou (2005) 1. Cf. Hardie (1991), 47; (2005) 91 and Keith in this volume. For the ‘little *Aeneid*’, see e.g. Papaioannou (2005), with pp. 3–16 for a discussion of earlier work.

While waiting for the queen studying everything there was to see under the roof of this huge temple, as he marvelled at the good fortune of the city, the skill of the workmen and all the works of their hands, he saw, laid out in order, depictions of the battles fought at Troy. The Trojan War was already famous throughout the world. The two sons of Atreus were there, and Priam, and Achilles, who hated both sides.

(*Aen.* 1.453–8)

As the murals themselves attest, the Trojan War depicted on the temple is ‘famous throughout the world’ (*vulgata per orbem*). Alessandro Barchiesi has argued, however, that these words can be read metapoetically, and that the war is depicted as ‘vulgarised, rendered hackneyed by the Cycle’ here: ‘*vulgatus* carries programmatic (post-Callimachean) implications as in *Georgics* 3.4 *omnia iam vulgata . . . ; orbis* indicates the hackneyed rotation of the epic *Kyklos* as in the *Ars Poetica* of Horace.’⁵² Following Callimachus, Virgil here renounces the Epic Cycle. This is reinforced by the fact that the murals are presented *ex ordine* (‘in order’), which recalls the way Cyclic epics were written, while Virgil’s own arrangement of the scenes is not chronological at all.⁵³

However, in his Callimachean reaction to the Epic Cycle, Virgil includes Homer as well, as is emphasised by *Iliacas* (456) and by line 458, which both clearly evoke the *Iliad* and frame the Callimachean comment in line 457. As we have seen, Valerius claims to take on Homer in Callimachean fashion as well, by evoking a pre-Homeric (even unborn) Achilles and Polyphemus. This Callimachean attitude is reflected by the epic itself, which, like the Hellenistic *Argonautica*, predates Homer’s world. Valerius, however, takes on not only Homer but the Roman Homer—Virgil—as well.

The Temple of Sol

Valerius’ second major ekphrasis, describing the engravings on the doors of the temple of Sol (5.415–54), clearly bring the first one to mind. It is for instance

52 Barchiesi (1999) 334, referring to Hor. *Ars* 131–2, 136–7. Cf. Barchiesi (1997) 273–4, 275; (2001) 135–6.

53 Barchiesi (1997) 273–4; (1999) 334–5; (2001) 136. Cf. e.g. Heerink (2012) 49–50, who compares Aristotle’s negative evaluation in the *Poetics* of the Epic Cycle and epics about one hero for their lack of unity and exhaustiveness with the reproach of Callimachus’ literary opponents, the Telchines, in the prologue to the *Aetia* that Callimachus had never written ἐν ᾧ εἰσμα διηγεχέες, ‘one continuous poem’ (i.e. a Cyclic epic?).

also divided into two parts, with the first door presenting three scenes from the early history of Colchis (5.415–32), and the three scenes on the second one (5.433–54) depicting the future.⁵⁴ The first two of these prophetic scenes represent the building and voyage of the Argo (433–9), which have already taken place in the epic, and events that are yet to happen (440–1):

aurea quin etiam praesaga Mulciber arte
 vellera venturosque olim caelarat Achivos.
texitur Argea pinus Pagasaea securi 435
 iamque eadem remos, eadem dea flectit habenas,
 ipsa subit nudaque vocat dux agmina dextra.
 exoritur Notus et toto ratis una profundo
 cernitur, Odrysio gaudebant carmine phocae.
 apparent trepidi per Phasidis ostia Colchi 440
 clamantemque procul linquens regina parentem.

Mulciber

had even sculpted there with art prophetic
 the Golden Fleece and Greeks to come one day.
 Pagasa's ship is built by Argus' ax;
 the goddess herself [Minerva] comes near to lead the battalion
 and calls with arm laid bare; she first works oars,
 and then the ropes. The south wind now kicks up,
 and one ship only is spotted on the whole sea,
 as seals enjoyed the song of the Thracian bard.
 Colchians are seen at Phasis' mouth, afraid;
 a princess [Medea] leaves her screaming mother far behind.
 (Val. Fl. 5.433–41)

This passage not only evokes the construction of the Argo in Book 1, it also clearly invites the reader to import the metapoetical meaning of that scene. This is emphasised by the use of the verb *texere* (435), which literally denotes weaving, but which can metaphorically denote not only building but writing as well (cf. *textus*, a 'woven fabric', but also a 'text').⁵⁵ So it is suggested that this

54 I follow Manuwald's (1998) arrangement of the scenes of the ekphrasis. For other theories, see Wijsman (1996) 203–4 (on Val. Fl. 5.415–54).

55 This poetological metaphor already occurs in archaic Greek poetry: see Svenbro (1976) 191–2 and Svenbro and Scheid (1996) 111–30. For the metaphor in Roman poetry, where

'mini-*Argonautica*' reflects Valerius' entire epic.⁵⁶ As was the case in Book 1, however, the same seems to go for the entire ekphrasis, of which the Argo scene constitutes the centre and thus a literal *mise en abyme* (within a *mise en abyme*).⁵⁷

The connection between Valerius' two ekphraseis is reinforced by their respective positions in the epic in combination with their shared intertext: *Aeneid* 1. As Andrew Zissos has emphasised, Valerius' epic consists clearly of two 'thematically and teleologically disconnected halves'.⁵⁸ This dichotomy is marked for instance by Valerius' second proem (5.217–24), which imitates the 'proems in the middle'⁵⁹ of both Apollonius (3.1–4) and its imitation by Virgil (*Aen.* 7.37–45). Although Valerius, like Apollonius, starts the second half of his epic with this proem, he clearly imitates Apollonius *through Virgil* by 'dividing his poem into Odyssean and Iliadic halves',⁶⁰ and by postponing his 'proem in the middle'.⁶¹ In what follows the proem, however, Valerius structurally imitates not only the second half of the *Aeneid*, as one would expect,⁶² but also

it became commonplace, see in particular Deremetz (1995) 289–93; Svenbro and Scheid (1996) 131–55.

- 56 Harrison (2013) 223: '5.433–41 could be a literal analepsis and a symbolic internal prolepsis of the poem's own plot'.
- 57 The term *mise en abyme* was first used to denote literary self-reflexivity by André Gide (in his diary in 1893; see Dällenbach (1989) 7 for the quoted passage), who, however, derived the term from heraldry, where the technical term denotes the placement of a miniature version of the original shield '*en abyme*', in the centre of it. Cf. Lüthje (1971) 222–3 (on which see n. 7 above) for the ekphrasis as reflecting the entire epic.
- 58 Zissos (2004d) 311.
- 59 The term is borrowed from Conte ((1992) = (2007) 219–31), who discusses the programmatic force of 'proems in the middle' in general and those of Virgil in particular.
- 60 Zissos (2004d) 317. Cf. Hardie (1989) 5: 'Valerius Flaccus in no respect shows himself more Virgilian than in his use of symmetry and repetition to give form to his poem.' Zissos stresses, however, that Valerius 'goes well beyond his model in the disjunctive effects of this type of narrative structure' ((2004d) 317).
- 61 Valerius' second proem is in fact more or less in the middle of the *Argonautica* as we have it. Its positioning is, however, also an important structural argument for the convincing theory that the intended length of the *Argonautica* was eight books: see Schetter (1959), followed e.g. by Nesselrath (1998), who suggests a plausible 'Virgilian' ending to the poem with Jason killing Absyrtus as modelled on Aeneas killing Turnus at the end of the *Aeneid*. Cf. the ending of Book 8 in Pio's *Supplement* (on which see Zissos in this volume).
- 62 See Hardie (1989) 5; Manuwald (1998) 317; Wedeniwski (2006) 191–2 for parallels between *Argonautica* 5 and *Aeneid* 7 after the respective proems in the middle (landing of the Argonauts/Trojans; ekphrasis of Sol's temple/Picus' palace, which serve as residences of Aeetes and Latinus respectively; meeting of Jason/Aeneas with Aeetes/Latinus).

Book 1 of Virgil's epic (*Aen.* 1.305–642), for instance when he models the first meeting between Jason and Medea (Val. Fl. 5.350–96) on that between Aeneas and Dido (*Aen.* 1.586–630), and the ensuing ekphrasis of the temple of Sol on Virgil's description of the temple of Juno (*Aen.* 1.450–95).⁶³ Again, these allusions can be explained by Valerius' reading of Apollonius through Virgil, who partly modelled the arrival and events taking place in Carthage in *Aeneid* 1 on Apollonius' third book.⁶⁴ Whereas in Apollonius' epic, the Argonauts marvel at Aeetes' palace (Ap. Rhod. 3.215–46) before meeting the king in person, Valerius, with a significant twist, describes a temple, which Jason is observing before he is interrupted by Aeetes entering the temple to hold court, just as Aeneas, looking at the murals in the temple of Juno, is interrupted by Dido, who is about to use the temple for the same purpose as Aeetes.

As we have seen, *Aeneid* 1 also played an intertextual role in Valerius' first book. Reused in a similar way in Book 5, the Virgilian intertext can be said to support the proem in marking the restart of the *Argonautica*. Furthermore, as the ekphrasis appears in a programmatic position similar to the one in Book 1, the reader is invited to read the ekphrasis of the temple doors as a metapoetical statement on Valerius' relationship to Virgil as well. Contrary to the strategy used in Book 1, however, Valerius does not employ 'Callimachean' language to express metapoetically his distance vis-à-vis Virgil. Rather, as I will argue, this second *mise en abyme* functions as an illustration of the first, providing a reason for Valerius' inversions of the *Aeneid*.

The First Door

The effect of the Carthaginian murals on Aeneas was that he felt reassured that he had arrived at a hospitable place, which was emphasised by the associative transition from one queen in the ekphrasis (Penthesilea) to another in the narrative (Dido). Similar to the effect of Valerius' ekphrasis in Book 1, however, the associations of the rulers on the temple doors, and the expectations they raise about the king of the country, are rather different from those in *Aeneid* 1.⁶⁵ The first scene on the first door depicts the Egyptian king Sesostris,

63 For Valerius' many allusions to *Aeneid* 1, see esp. the commentaries by Wijsman (1996) and Spaltenstein (2004a) *ad loc.* and the convenient discussion by Manuwald (1998) 316–17. For Valerius' and Virgil's temple ekphrasis in particular, see also e.g. Schetter (1959) 308; Lüthje (1971) 223; Adamietz (1976) 75–6; Hershkowitz (1998b) 20; Manuwald (1998) 317; Schmitzer (1999) 154; Wedeniowski (2006) 193; Harrison (2013) 222–3.

64 See esp. Nelis (2001) 67–112 on the intertextual contact between Virgil's Carthage and Apollonius' Colchis.

65 Cf. Manuwald (1998) 311–12.

who founded Colchis after he was defeated by the Getae and had to retreat (5.417–23). While he may recall Dido in founding a kingdom in exile, Sesostris is a less responsible king in that he returns to Egypt, leaving his people behind. Because of his coercive behaviour (*imperet*, 421), Aeetes' predecessor can even be considered a tyrant. Jason then sees the 'barbarian' (*barbarus*, 424) river god Phasis chasing the nymph Aea to ravish her (424–8). Although it does not depict a king, this scene from Colchian history does not bode well for Jason's meeting with the ruler of the land. Furthermore, the 'Ovidian' character of this rape scene prepares the viewer and in particular the reader for the final scene on the first door. This depicts Phaethon, Sol's son and Aeetes' half-brother, who has just died after the disastrous ride in his father's chariot and is mourned by his sisters:

flebant populeae iuvenem Phaethonta sorores
 ater et Eridani trepidum globus ibat in amnem.
 at iuga vix Tethys sparsumque recolligit axem
 et formidantem patrios Pyroenta dolores.

Young Phaethon was mourned by poplar sisters,
 and his black lump landed in the frightened stream
 of Eridanus. Tethys finds it hard
 collecting the yoke and shattered wheel of Flame,
 the horse who fears the father's grief.

(Val. Fl. 5.429–32)

This passage evokes the extensive version of the Phaethon story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.750–2.400). This intertext had already been triggered by Valerius' general description of the temple of Sol preceding the ekphrasis of the temple doors (5.426–409), which clearly evokes Ovid's ekphrasis of the doors of Sol's palace (*Met.* 2.1–18) with its display of cosmic scenes carved (again) by Vulcan.⁶⁶ Exploiting the ancient metaphor of driving a chariot for governing the state, Roman writers used the myth of Phaethon and his disastrous ride for

66 For Valerius' specific allusions to Ovid here, see Keith in this volume (286–9, with n. 50 for more bibliography). Val. Fl. 5.407–9: *non aliter quam si radiantis adirent | ora dei verasque aeterni luminis arces, | tale iubar <per> tecta micat* ('no different would it be | if they approached the god's own shining face | and the true bastions of eternal light, | such beams of light were flashing in the temple') seems to comment self-consciously on the intertextual contact: the Valerian building is so similar to the Ovidian one that it is as if the Argonauts are approaching Sol's palace in *Metamorphoses* 2.

political purposes, to express their ‘concerns about imperial succession’.⁶⁷ This ‘allegorical-political reading’ of Phaethon as the failed ruler started with Ovid, according to Ulrich Schmitzer,⁶⁸ who reads Augustus and his failure to live up to his supposedly divine origin behind Phaethon and his hubristic ride in his father’s chariot.⁶⁹ As part of this interpretation, the ekphrasis of Sol’s palace is seen to refer to Apollo’s temple on the Palatine, which for instance also featured engraved doors made of ivory and was closely connected to Augustus, who had it built next to his house on the Palatine after his victory in the battle of Actium.⁷⁰

Several poets have followed Ovid’s political-allegorical use of Phaethon, and I think Valerius should be added to the list. The Valerian context, however, in which Phaethon prefigures Aeetes,⁷¹ suggests an association of Phaethon not with Augustus but with his descendant Nero, for, as Ruth Taylor has argued on different grounds, Aeetes in the *Argonautica* evokes the last Julio-Claudian emperor.⁷² Seneca had already used Phaethon as a mask for Nero in his *Medea*, and Statius would later do the same in his *Thebaid*.⁷³ More interesting for our context, however, is Lucan, who subversively associates Nero with Phaethon in the proem to his *Bellum Civile* (1.45–52).⁷⁴ In Book 10 of his epic, Lucan describes Cleopatra’s palace (10.111–21), the only ekphrasis in the entire epic, in terms that clearly evoke Ovid’s description of Sol’s palace.⁷⁵ It has been argued that Cleopatra and her palace allude to Nero and his luxuriously decorated, Alexandrian-style *Domus Transitoria* and *Domus Aurea*.⁷⁶ This interpretation is I think reinforced by Lucan’s allusions to Ovid’s Phaethon episode, the political dimension of which Lucan seems to have imported and used for his own purposes, and in this he is followed by Valerius. Interestingly, Lucan and Valerius share another intertext, for, as in *Argonautica* 5, Caesar’s arrival and stay in Alexandria, of which the ekphrasis of the Ptolemaic palace is part, is

67 Rebggiani (2013) 187. See pp. 188–9 for a convenient survey (and more bibliography).

68 Schmitzer (1990) 106.

69 Schmitzer (1990) 89–107.

70 Schmitzer (1990) 91.

71 Cf. Sol’s speech in Book 1 (505–27), in which the god also associates Phaethon with Aeetes. For this speech, see also Ganiban in this volume.

72 Taylor (1994) 228–31. See also Cowan in this volume.

73 For Seneca’s *Medea*, see e.g. Schmitzer (1990) 106 with n. 172; for Statius’ *Thebaid*, see Rebggiani (2013).

74 I follow the interpretation by Hinds (1987) 26–9.

75 Berti (2000) 126.

76 See esp. Bastet (1970) 140–4; Schmidt (1986) 194–6.

based on *Aeneid* 1.⁷⁷ Lucan's Cleopatra and Valerius' Aeetes are thus both modelled on Nero and Virgil's Dido, but whereas the Virgilian ekphrasis could reassure Aeneas that Carthage and her queen would be hospitable, this is not the case in Lucan and Valerius, as both ekphraseis show that both Cleopatra and Aeetes have bad news in store for Caesar and Jason respectively.⁷⁸

The Second Door

Valerius' in- and per-versions of the *Aeneid* continue in the ekphrasis of the second door of Sol's temple, as does the political undercurrent introduced by the appearance of Phaethon. Valerius starts by describing the construction and voyage of the Argo in two scenes, as we have seen (5.433–41), moving gradually from internal analepsis to prolepsis.⁷⁹ The third and final scene, which is clearly set off from the previous ones (*contra*, 442), then depicts events that we know from the tragedies of Euripides and Seneca⁸⁰ and that lie beyond Valerius' text as we have it (and in all probability beyond the intended ending of the epic).⁸¹ Accordingly, Jason and the Colchians do not know what they are seeing:

haec tum miracula Colchis
struxerat Ignipotens nondum noscentibus, ille
quis labor, aligeris aut quae secet anguibus auras
caede madens. odere tamen visusque reflectunt.
quin idem Minyas operum **defixerat** horror,⁸² 455
cum se Sole satus patriis penetralibus infert.

77 See e.g. Zwierlein (1974) 61–4; Berti (2000) 17–8; Rossi (2005) 239–43.

78 Cf. Schmitzer (1999) 153: 'Es liegt also nahe, das Los Phaethons allenfalls als düsteres Omen für Aietes und die Seinen zu lesen, nicht aber für Jason und die Argonauten.' Although Virgil's Dido inevitably evokes the historical Cleopatra as well (see esp. Pease 1935: 24–8), I would maintain that Virgil's depiction of Dido is far more positive than Lucan's Cleopatra and Valerius' Aeetes.

79 Hershkowitz (1998b) 21: 'as the description continues, the analepsis becomes internal, and then shifts into prolepsis'.

80 Although the scene immediately brings Euripides' *Medea* to mind, Spaltenstein (2004a) 506 shows that Valerius' text refers mainly to Seneca's *Medea* (which also features a burning palace, contrary to Euripides' play). Cf. Davis (1989) 61.

81 For the intended length and ending of the *Argonautica*, see n. 61 above. See Hershkowitz (1998b) 1–34 for the difficulty in distinguishing between internal and external prolepseis because of the *Argonautica*'s incompleteness.

82 With e.g. Liberman (2002) I read Meyncke's (1867: 369) conjectural emendation *horror* here instead of the transmitted *error*, which is printed by Ehlers (1980). See also Wedeniowski (2006) 164, n. 526 for arguments supporting the reading *horror*.

These wonders then the great god of fire had made
 for the Colchians, who could not grasp as yet
 what was that trouble, or who she was that sped
 through air on winged snakes and dripped with blood,
 but still they hate it and turn their eyes away.
 Indeed, the same revulsion at this artwork
 had held the Minyae in its grip, when there
 the child of Sun entered his father's sanctum.

(Val. Fl. 5.451–6)

With Valerius' switch to external prolepsis, his main Virgilian intertext changes as well. Like Virgil's murals in Juno's temple in *Aeneid* 1, Valerius' first door had depicted the past, but the prophetic second door alludes to another Virgilian ekphrasis, which similarly constitutes an external prolepsis: the Shield of Aeneas, another work of art crafted by Vulcan, depicting the glorious Augustan future of Rome (*Aen.* 8.626–731).⁸³ Valerius' grim depiction of the future of Jason and Medea, however, completely inverts Virgil's optimistic vision of Rome. This inversion is reinforced by the reaction of the Colchians, who do not know what they are seeing, 'but still they hate it and turn their eyes away' (Val. Fl. 5.453), and of the Argonauts, who shiver at the sight of the work of art (455). This contrasts sharply with the reaction of Aeneas, who also does not know what he sees, but rejoices in it:

talìa per clipeum Volcani, dona parentis,
 miratur rerumque ignarus **imagine gaudet**
 attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum.

Such were the scenes spread over the shield that Vulcan made and Venus gave to her son. Marvelling at it, and rejoicing at the things pictured on it without knowing what they were, Aeneas lifted on to his shoulder the fame and the fate of his descendants.

(*Aen.* 8.729–31)

In fact, this brings to mind Jason's initial, general impression of the temple, just before he turns his eyes towards the images on the doors:⁸⁴ *nec minus hinc*

83 For Valerius' allusions to Aeneas' Shield, see Schetter (1959) 308; Adamietz (1976) 76; Hershkowitz (1998b) 20–2; Manuwald (1998) 317–18; Wedeniowski (2006) 182–4.

84 Cf. Hershkowitz (1998b) 20–1, who suggests that Virgil's Shield is already an intertext for Valerius' ekphrasis of the first door, as both ekphrasises contain external analepsis depicting early Roman and Colchian history respectively.

varia dux laetus imagine templi | ad geminas fert ora fores . . . ('Delighted with the temple's varied imagery, the leader likewise casts his gaze upon the double doors . . .').⁸⁵ Jason's delight precedes the actual viewing of the work of art, and so this is a structural inversion of *Aeneid* 8, where Aeneas rejoices *after* the ekphrasis. This in its turn reinforces the thematic inversion from the positive reaction of Aeneas to the negative one of both Colchians and Argonauts.

So references to Virgil's Shield frame—and invert—Valerius' ekphrasis. As was the case in Book 1, however, the same goes for Valerius' other Virgilian intertext for his ekphrasis, Juno's temple in Carthage, for the reaction of the Colchians and Argonauts also echoes that of Aeneas in *Aeneid* 1.⁸⁶ Again, however, Valerius has negatively inverted his Virgilian intertext, where Aeneas is in a state of amazement, before Dido enters the stage (compare the words in bold):

haec dum Dardanio Aeneae **miranda** videntur
dum stupet obtutuque haeret defixus in uno,
regina . . .

While Trojan Aeneas stood gazing, rooted to the spot and lost in amazement at what he saw, Queen Dido . . .

(*Aen.* 1.494–6)

Conclusion

So what is the point of these allusions to and inversions of Virgil's *Aeneid*? In the case of the ekphrasis of the Argo in Book 1, the inversions support Valerius' *mise en abyme*: by alluding to Callimachean poets and associating himself with their poetics, Valerius claims to distance himself from Virgil's *Aeneid*. The ekphrasis of the doors of Sol's temple, placed at a similarly programmatic position and evoking the same Virgilian intertext, seems to illustrate the first ekphrasis and explain Valerius' attitude towards the *Aeneid*. By introducing a new intertext—the Shield in *Aeneid* 8—Valerius evokes Virgil's optimistic prophecy of Augustan Rome. As the ekphrasis progresses, however, the tone gets more pessimistic and the description ends with a vision of the future that is the exact

85 Translation by Harrison (2013) 222. For this interpretation of the lines, see Manuwald (1998) 312, n. 13 (contra Lüthje (1971) 222–3; see also n. 7 above).

86 Cf. Schetter (1959) 308 on the combination of *Aeneid* 1 and 8 as intertexts here at the end of the ekphrasis.

opposite of Virgil's. Meanwhile, allusions to Phaethon have associated Aeetes with Nero, and indeed the king will prove to be a tyrant in the remainder of the epic. By the time Valerius wrote his *Argonautica*, Virgil's perfect, Augustan picture of a future Rome, emblematically envisaged on the Shield of Aeneas, had been shattered by Nero and the ensuing civil wars of 68–9 C.E. Behind Valerius' increasingly pessimistic epic, of which the ekphrasis can be seen as a *mise en abyme*,⁸⁷ lies a disappointed world view; Valerius does not believe in *imperium sine fine* ('an empire that will know no end') as famously prophesied by Jupiter in the *Aeneid* (1.254–96) any more. In fact, Valerius' Jupiter, in a speech that is clearly modelled on that of Virgil's Jupiter, strikingly does not mention the Romans as the new rulers of the world (1.531–67).⁸⁸ Writing under Vespasian, who claimed to be a new Augustus,⁸⁹ Valerius at first sight seems to follow suit and replay the *Aeneid* when he addresses the emperor in his proem and associates him with Jason and the Argonauts, just like Virgil associates Aeneas with Augustus. But Valerius is not following Virgil; his *Argonautica*, which initiates a new but harsh iron age, reveals a disappointed attitude concerning the Principate and shows that an *Aeneid* in the Flavian age is not possible any more. One can understand the optimism of the Augustan age, when the first *princeps* had ended more than half a century of traumatic civil wars, but one can equally understand Valerius in not believing in the Augustan dream any more.⁹⁰

87 Cf. Manuwald (1998) 318: 'Die Erzeugung einer düsteren Stimmung durch die Bildbeschreibung ist ein Zug, der sich aus Valerius Flaccus' pessimistischer Weltsicht ergibt und auch an vielen anderen Stellen seines Werks zu beobachten ist.'

88 Cf. Bernstein in this volume on Jupiter's prophecy (p. 160) and Valerius' pessimistic world-view in general.

89 See e.g. Boyle (2003) 4–6.

90 See also Bernstein in this volume on Valerius' epic in the light of the recent civil wars.

PART 2

Themes and Contexts



Myth and Mythopoesis in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

James J. Clauss

The Possibility of Mythopoeic Composition in the Post-Mythic Era

In deciding to create an epic on a heroic theme, ancient artists, whether composing orally or in writing, had a number of options from which to choose. These included not only the specific topic itself but also the variants within any given narrative, many of which can be traced back to the Archaic period when the reintroduction of writing and in time vase paintings started to preserve pan-Hellenic and local versions. What is more, we find already within the earliest surviving epics the willingness of composers to 'contaminate', if you will, their plots by incorporating stories from different traditions that appear to complement their themes.¹ Since mythological epics, such as the story of Jason and the Argonauts, are based on traditional tales told over scores of generations,² a fascinating issue that emerges in the discussion of epic poetry involves whether or not there is a significant difference between the narrating of traditional non-literary, popular, prosaic or poetic treatments of the stories from which epics ultimately came and their handling within a fully evolved genre with rules and expectations. As Walter Burkert noted, traditional tales can only be considered 'traditional' if they were told again, a process that would inevitably lead to conscious change.³

As it happens, ancient Greek folktales and formal epic emerged from the post-Mycenaean Dark Age around the same point in time, as can be gleaned from close readings of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which can be shown to represent

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- 1 E.g. Meleager's heroic tale within the *Iliad* (Edmunds (2005) 36) or the folktale of the sailor and the oar in the *Odyssey* (Hansen (1990)).
 - 2 See in general Edmunds (1990) 1–20, (1997) and (2005).
 - 3 Burkert (1979) 2. A comparison between the versions of *Little Red Cap* in Perrault and the Brothers Grimm offers an excellent example of how a traditional folktale encounters what Edmunds ((1990) 15) calls a 'unique, individual, motivated retelling or artistic reuse of that tale'.

adaptations of folktales.⁴ As Richard Martin notes, myth, legends and all types of folktales can be seen as synchronic and interactive with epic.⁵ Since similar to intertextual and consciously literary narratives folktales in their various manifestations create new versions that vie with previous ones in an attempt to take their place, we might well ask: if folktales and epics behave in the same fashion, are they essentially different, any and all distinctions of genre set aside? The question should become more difficult to answer the farther back in time we go, when the genre that would turn into fully developed epic was only beginning to distinguish itself from popular folktales. Unfortunately for this question, we first come upon epic only in full bloom. Once we move beyond the Archaic and into the Hellenistic and Roman eras, writers of epic are more easily detected as engaged in a literary enterprise in which they not only aspire to create a new version of an ancient epic, but also employ a panoply of devices that call attention to their artistry, potentially nudging the reader away from whatever might have been the original urge for the story, and reapplying the narrative to the author's particular goals that typically respond to contemporary events. It is ironically the latter wherein we might find literary artists at their most mythopoeic, to which notion I now turn.

The question regarding the origin and definition of different types of traditional tales that we broadly identify under the generic term of 'myth' is old, complex and, as it happens, not critical to determine once and for all for the purposes of the present paper.⁶ In refining his definition of myth, Walter Burkert ((1979) 23) calls it 'a traditional tale with secondary, partial reference to something of collective importance ... a traditional tale applied; and its relevance and seriousness stem largely from this application ... the first and fundamental verbalization of complex reality, the primary way to speak about many-sided problems'. Moreover, myth 'may constitute preformation of decisions, motivation, and certainly propaganda' ((1979) 25). Burkert goes on to stipulate, however, that '[a]n age of myth, in our sense, would be an epoch when adaptation of traditional tales is the only or the main method of general speculation and communication, in order to verbalize phenomena, to give them coherence and sense' ((1979) 24). This stipulation requires that artists who live in an age where there are other intellectual modalities for explaining the world around them are not engaged in creating myths, whether they are retelling traditional stories or inventing them, as Plato appears to have Aristophanes do in the *Symposium*. We might, however, take into consideration the close

4 Edmunds (2005) 34–9.

5 Martin (2005).

6 Csapo (2005) provides an outstanding historical summary of the various approaches to myth.

interrelationship between myth and epic mentioned above and see that what they both aim at, to use Martin's definition of epic, is 'to articulate the most essential aspects of a culture, from its origin stories to its ideals of social behavior, social structure, relationship to the natural world and to the supernatural' ((2009) 18). At the risk of being overly and simplistically reductive, what links both myths, as Burkert sees them, and literary epics, as Martin describes them, is the serious concern with accounting for critical cultural issues of the storytellers by way of adapting traditional tales in order to gain understanding or offer new interpretations of the issues at stake. The term mythopoeic, the dynamic process of creating new myths, might be able to accommodate the aspirations of both types of narrators. In what follows, I shall attempt to identify several places in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* that suggest that he may be said to have engaged in genuine post-mythic era mythopoeic thinking alongside intertextual and other self-conscious literary devices, which readers of Valerius have observed.⁷ It is in these places that we see Valerius articulating central aspects of Flavian cultural values, particularly in response to Julio-Claudian myth.

Fortunately for me, Denis Feeney has already blazed a trail in the direction I am going. In *Literature and Religion in Rome* ((1998) 47–75) Feeney argues against those who see Roman myth as inauthentic and refuse to 'ascribe vitality to Roman mythopoesis' (57), pointedly asking if contemporary Italian cuisine too should be considered inauthentic, given that it lacked a defining ingredient, the tomato, a New World fruit unknown to pre-Columbian Italian cuisine (58). As he notes, Greek myth was critical to Roman self-fashioning and public ideology. Its adaptation by Roman writers offered them the opportunity to situate Rome within a cosmic history that stretched back to creation, regime change in Olympus, and legendary conflicts between East and West that led up to the founding of the city. The inevitable comparisons between Self and Other that emerged thanks to the insinuation of Rome within the Greek mythological narrative allowed the Romans to adapt traditional tales in order to gain understanding of the issues at stake, especially Roman identity in a universe defined by the Greeks. In this, as also observed by Feeney, the Romans merely followed the example of the Greeks before them who fully adopted and adapted Eastern and Egyptian myths in order to gain entry into universal history and at the same time come to terms with their presence on the world scene. Whether the narrative is ancient or modern, in prose or poetry, popular or literary, if it retells a traditional tale in order to make sense of something—the origin of the

7 E.g. Zissos (1999), (2002) (with emphasis on the Homeric intertext) and (2008) xxxiv–xxxix, with many references to the rich work on Valerian intertextuality.

world, natural phenomena, a people's place in the world—it is mythopoeic. As Jonathan Smith, quoted by Feeney, succinctly states (57): 'There is no pristine myth; there is only application.'⁸

The Argonautic Expedition as Mythical Prelude to Flavian Rome

Immediately following a four-line introduction of his topic and a three-line address to Apollo, Valerius engages in what I believe is one of his defining mythopoeic moments: the introduction of Vespasian into the Argonautic myth:⁹

tuque o pelagi cui maior aperti fama, Caledonius postquam tua carbasa vexit Oceanus Phrygios prius indignatus Iulos, eripe me populis et habenti nubila terrae,	10
namque potes, veterumque fave, venerande, canenti facta virum. versam proles tua pandit Idumen, sancte pater, Solymo nigrantem pulvere fratrem spargentemque faces et in omni turre furentem.	15
ille tibi cultusque deum delubraque centum instituet, cum iam, genitor, lucebis ab omni parte poli. neque enim Tyriae Cynosura carinae certior aut Graeis Helice servanda magistris, sed tu signa dabis, sed te duce Graecia mittet et Sidon Nilusque rates: nunc nostra serenus	20
orsa iuves, haec ut Latias vox impleat urbes.	

And you, whose fame for opening up a sea is
greater, after the Caledonian Ocean carried your sails,
the Ocean that had earlier deemed the Phrygian Iuli unworthy,

8 N.b.: Zissos (1999) 300 n. 44, although focused primarily on intertextuality, concludes by quoting Froma Zeitlin's description of myth ((1985) 53) as 'the province of an individual poet who, while in active engagement with the mythic material of the tradition, himself is involved in a true act of mythopoesis'. While both intertextual writing and mythopoesis may involve the manipulation of tradition and reuse of specific texts, it will be useful to distinguish between a literary and a mythopoeic gesture; in what follows I will attempt to deal exclusively with the latter, aware that the lines will sometimes blur.

9 For the most recent (and most encompassing) commentary on these lines, see Zissos (2008) 81–95; for a recent discussion of these lines underscoring their association with Lucan and civil war, see Penwill (2013) 32–7.

raise me beyond the common people and cloud-enveloped earth,
 for you are able, and look kindly on me, o venerable one, as I sing about the
 deeds of ancient men. Your offspring, holy father, reveals the destruction
 of Idume, a brother dark with the dust of Solyma,
 casting torches and attacking every tower with unbridled ferocity.
 He will found cults of the gods and a hundred shrines
 when you, o father, will shine from every direction
 of the sky, for Cynosura will not be more certain for the Tyrian
 ship nor will Helice have to be watched carefully by Greek helmsmen,
 but you will provide the signs, but under your leadership Greece and
 Sidon and the Nile will send forth ships. Now please aid
 my undertakings in peace so that this voice of mine might fill Latin
 cities.¹⁰

(Val. Fl. 1.7–21)

The inclusion of Vespasian and his sailing of the Caledonian sea around Britain during the time of Claudius not only celebrates the expansion of the Roman Empire with a passing slight aimed at the Julio-Claudians (*maior . . . fama* seems particularly pointed in the context of line 9),¹¹ but also inserts the emperor's historical navigation within the history of sailing from its mythical beginning (noted by Hardie (1993) 83)¹² and the on-going power struggle between East and West which, according to Herodotus (1.1–5), began with the abduction of Io by Phoenicians, was retaliated in time by Jason's abduction of Medea, led in turn to Paris' abduction of Helen, and in historical times resurfaced as the Persian Wars. Helen's departure with Paris of course led to the second Trojan War, which, from a Roman perspective, brought about the founding of Rome by way of Aeneas and the eventual shift of power further westward. And yet Valerius trumps this traditional and Julian myth, as I will argue. While Medea's role in the present epic is to be expected, far less obvious is the presence of Io, whom Valerius includes in a significant digression (4.344–421), underscoring the Herodotean connection, on which more below.¹³ Troy too is present, but in the context of its first sack by Hercules, whose cause—Laomedon's refusal

10 All translations are my own. Texts in Book 1 come from Zissos (2008); in Book 2 from Ehlers (1980); in Book 4 from Murgatroyd (2009).

11 As Kleywegt (2005) 13–14 notes. Stover (2012a) 65 n. 122 observes that such criticism is unique among Flavian writers.

12 On Vespasian's presentation as a 'latter-day Argonaut', see Stover (2012a) 62–70.

13 As Zissos (2008) xxxvi–xxxvii notes, the influence of Herodotus, among other prose writers, has been underestimated in general. I would add that the presence of a Herodotean

to pay Hercules for saving his daughter—the poet embedded in the narrative of the Argo's eastward journey (2.451–578, 4.58–9), thus adding to Herodotus' mythological aetiology of the tensions between East and West; more on this below.

By foregrounding the expansion of the Empire, celebrated in 75 CE with the extension of the *pomerium* because of the British campaign referred to here¹⁴ and the recent conquest of Palestine as part of the prelude to the Argonautic expedition,¹⁵ Valerius situates Flavian Rome within mythic history, similar to what Virgil did for Augustan Rome, and thus retells a traditional tale in such a way as to recalibrate contemporary Rome's place in the world by connecting the Flavian regime with a pre-Trojan and pre-Aenean myth. As Zissos ((2009b) 504) notes, Valerius' incorporation of this 'event of transcendent geopolitical importance' results in 'the superimposition of a schema of universal history upon the inherited mythopoeic tradition'. I would go further in calling the superimposition mythopoeic in itself. The implication is intriguing. Augustan Rome was not after all the apex of universal history as envisaged by Virgil; Vespasian's and Titus' exploits link with the first ship that brought about the very possibility of world domination and the first sack of Troy, giving the Flavians an even more august mythic connection, if you will. Vespasian's successful navigation of the Ocean is implicitly associated with, and *eo ipso* represents the culmination of, the primordial sailing event belonging to the Argo.¹⁶ As Burkert noted, myth is closely tied to propaganda.

The Rehabilitated Jason as Mythic Exemplar for Flavian Rome

Equally bold on Valerius' part is the stunning, almost unthinkable, rehabilitation of Jason, whom Euripides would seem to have defined permanently as weak and self-serving and whose heroism Apollonius further reduced to

intertext in Apollonius' *Argonautica* may have influenced Valerius; see Clauss (2000) 26–8.

14 See Stover (2012a) 47.

15 Nauta (2006) 27–30 nicely calls attention to the *recusatio* motif in Valerius' implied avoidance of celebrating Titus' victory in Palestine; cf. Zissos (2008) 86–7, who notes its 'subtle affirmation of Flavian dynastic aspirations'. See now also Galli (2013) 57–60.

16 Unfortunately, as the epic breaks off at 8.467, we never discover whether or not Valerius' Argonauts sail on the Ocean, as they did in some versions (e.g. Hes. fr. 241 Merkelbach–West, Hecataeus, *FGrHist* 1F18, and Pindar, *P.* 4.19–27; see Gantz (1993) 362). If they did, then Vespasian would also be seen as sailing in the same path as the Argo.

manager, arbitrator and deal broker.¹⁷ The reimagining of Jason as an archaic hero fiercely desirous of glory (Val. Fl. 1.76–8),¹⁸ a Jason more at home in pre-classical versions of the myth as far as can be reconstructed from largely fragmentary texts and vase paintings,¹⁹ serves the larger mythopoeic goal of connecting Flavian Rome with the first—and thus pre-Julian—Trojan War. What is more, the Argonautic expedition is associated with the time in which Jupiter, countering the *otia* of the Saturnian era (Val. Fl. 1.500), set in motion the series of events that would eventually lead to the founding of Rome and ultimate ascendancy of Vespasian and his regime.²⁰ The rehabilitated Jason, whose expedition, as mentioned above, Valerius links with Vespasian's Caledonian navigation and the destruction of Jerusalem, offers a mythological paradigm of, and thus explanation for, the emergence of the new dynasty. This mythological end run around Julian propaganda might well anticipate Domitian's enveloping of the largely Julian Roman forum with the Temple of Vespasian and Titus at the base of the Capitoline Hill and Arch of Titus on the Velia. Zissos ((2005) 508) rightly notes the poet's 'impressive ability radically to transform the narrative material of his Hellenistic predecessor'.

Jupiter's Speech: Recalibrating the Argonautic Myth

In a speech modelled upon Virgil's Jovian pronouncements regarding Rome's future (*Aen.* 1.257–96, 10.104–17, 12.830–40), Valerius' Jupiter extends Herodotus' explanation of the Persian Wars as the culmination of mythic tension between East and West as the result of high-profile abductions by allusion to Rome:²¹

17 E.g., *inter alios*, Clauss (1993) and (1997).

18 Well described by Hershkowitz (1998b) 105–28 and Stover (2012a) 181–218; see also Ripoll (1998) 201–6, Zissos (2008) 125–6 and (2005) 505.

19 A representation that most fully survives in Pindar's *Pythian* 4.

20 One might compare, for instance, the presence of archaising motifs in Augustus' Temple of Apollo Palatinus, whose archaic terracotta plaques evoke pre-classical Greece at the same time as celebrating a contemporary military victory; on the use of archaic motifs in this highly classicising Augustan monument and others, see Zanker (1988) 85–9, 103, 110, 246–7 (Figs. 191, 192, 193). Feeney (1991) 314–15 also recalls this shrine but in the context of the belief that Valerius served as one of the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* in charge of the Sibylline books that were kept here. As Zissos (2008) xiii–xiv observes, this identification appears convincing and is held by a majority of scholars.

21 On the theme of the succession of world empires in ancient literature, see Zissos (2008) 314–15 with references.

accelerat sed summa dies Asiamque labantem
 linquimus et poscunt iam me sua tempora Grai.
 inde meae quercus tripodesque animaeque parentum
 hanc pelago misere manum. via facta per undas 545
 perque hiemes, Bellona, tibi. nec vellera tantum
 indignanda manent propiorque ex virgine rapta
 ille dolor, sed—nulla magis sententia menti
 fixa meae—veniet Phrygia iam pastor ab Ida,
 qui gemitus irasque pares et mutua Graiis 550
 dona ferat. quae classe dehinc effusa procorum
 bella, quot ad Troiam flentes hiberna Mycenae,
 quot proceres natosque deum, quae robora cernes
 oppetere et magnis Asiam concedere fati!
 hinc Danaum de fine sedet gentesque fovebo 555
 mox alias. pateant montes silvaeque lacusque
 cunctaque claustra maris, spes et metus omnibus esto.
 arbiter ipse locos terrenaque summa movendo
 experiar, quaenam populis longissima cunctis
 regna velim linquamque datas ubi certus habenas. 560

But the last day is fast approaching and we are abandoning Asia on the verge of collapse and the Greeks now demand of me their own time.

Therefore my oak trees and tripods, and the spirits of ancestors have sent this crew across the sea. A path has been made over the waves and storms for you, Bellona. And neither fleeces that rouse anger nor that deeper

pain from the abduction of a young woman remain, but—no decision is more fixed in my mind—a shepherd will come from Phrygian Ida, who will bring equal grief and rage and commensurate gifts to the Greeks. What wars will you behold pouring fourth from the fleet of suitors! For how many winters near Troy (will you see) Mycenae in tears! How many chieftains and sons of gods, what power will you see perish and Asia yield to its ultimate fate.

After this my mind is made up regarding the end of the Danai and I will soon

favour other peoples. Let the mountains, forests, lakes and all the barriers of the sea open up, let hope and fear motivate all. I myself as judge, by shifting the seats of power on earth,

will determine by trial which kingdoms I want to have longest sway
 over all peoples and where, once resolved, I shall bestow and leave the
 reins of power.

(Val. Fl. 1.542–60)

Whereas Virgil understandably focused on the second Trojan War as the primordial mythic event in the origin of what was to become Augustan Rome, Valerius has his Jupiter antedate the prediction of Roman greatness in an Argonautic context that the poet specifically linked with the first of the Flavian emperors, a ploy made possible by the poet's privileging a Herodotean historical schema, as noted by Zissos ((2008) 318). While the imitation of the Virgilian passage is literary, Valerius' engagement with universal history, I propose, is mythopoeic. His Jupiter envisages a future empire that is not limited to or defined by a specific dynasty. The unnamed empire will reside in the hands of those to whom he can give power with confidence and for the longest time. With recent history in mind, the Julio-Claudians can be said to have failed to live up to Jupiter's expectations. In this case, intertextuality and myth work hand in glove to articulate and account for the return to an older sense of greatness based on heroic aspirations—as evinced by Jason and by implication the Flavii—and not family, a concept critical in the delicate positioning within mythic history of *novi homines* who lacked any connection with Italic or Hellenic mythology but whose significant achievements included accession to imperial power and new conquests celebrated in monumental fashion in Rome, including the construction of the iconic Colosseum and the Temple of Peace, completed in the same year in which the *pomerium* was extended.²² The latter, set within a space and alignment that extended Julius' and Augustus' fora, evoked a new era of peace in the wake of civil war, a *pax Flavianica*.

The Mythopoesis of Suicide and Dismemberment

Retrojection of current events into a traditional tale can also be construed as mythopoeic if the writer suggests through the narrative that the reader encounters an apparent aetiology for the embedded anachronistic event, a major example of which is provided by the Argonautic myth itself; during the fifth century BCE elements of the story evolved in such a way as to provide

22 On Vespasian's embracing of his *ignobilitas* in contrast to the Julian *gens*, see Zissos (2008) 84.

more pointed mythic evidence for the antipathy between Greece and Persia.²³ Political suicides became a hallmark of the late Julio-Claudian era, inspired by the celebrated death of Cato Uticensis. Seneca's death by hemlock, a clear nod to Socrates' state-imposed suicide and elegantly narrated by Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.60–4), represented one of the more famous anticipations of tyrannical murder. According to archaic versions of the Argonautic myth, when Jason and Medea return, Aeson is still alive (Pindar, *P.* 4. 120–3) and Medea rejuvenates her new husband's aging father (*Nostoi* fr. 7 PEG), showing that in earlier accounts he did not commit suicide; it was either this rejuvenation or that of a ram that functioned as part of Medea's ruse to kill Pelias by his own daughter's hands. Valerius, following a later tradition found in Diodorus (4.50) and Apollodorus (1.9.27), has Aeson and his wife Alcimede kill themselves in order to thwart Pelias' plan to murder them in retaliation for Jason's having taken his son Acastus on board the Argo (Val. Fl. 1.700–818); according to Diodorus and Apollodorus this happens after the Argonauts are believed to have died.²⁴ Given contemporary history, the suicide, which includes Valerius' imitation of the many epic necromancy scenes from Book 11 of the *Odyssey* to Lucan's Erichtho episode (Val. Fl. 1.730–51), invites readers to connect comparable Roman acts of desperation in the face of imperial cruelty, especially those under Nero whom Vespasian ultimately replaced, with the deaths of Jason's parents.²⁵ Pelias'

23 Although Hesiod makes Medus/Medeus the son of Jason and Medea (*Th.* 992–1002), his later identification as the son of Medea and Aegeus who returns with Medea to Colchis and gives his name to the Medes, the predecessors of the Persians, appears to be a fifth-century development (Gantz (1993) i.372–3). The connection between Medea and the Persians can also be seen in vase paintings depicting Euripides' *Medea*; see Sourvinou-Inwood (1997).

24 Diodorus' version came from the rationalising account of the Argonautic expedition by Dionysius Scytobrachion (c. early third century BCE). On the influence of Dionysius/Diodorus on Valerius, see Zissos (2008) xxvi n. 78 with references to earlier discussions. Zissos (2008) 379–81 also provides an excellent summary of the central issues of this episode, again with full documentation of earlier scholarship. For the view that Pelias' retaliation on behalf of his son might be mere pretence, see Fucecchi (2013) 108.

25 See McGuire (1997) 192–3 and Zissos (2005) 512–13. Given Valerius' unflattering critique of the Julio-Claudians mentioned above, I would disagree with Zissos that the poet necessarily recreates the polarised political situation of imperial Rome in general, in which the senatorial order is at odds with the imperial court. Rather, given the panegyric prologue and perhaps a genuine sense of optimism under Vespasian, that situation, as replicated in Iolcus, would best describe the previous regime; most scholars now agree that the *Argonautica* was written under the first of the Flavian emperors (see most recently Zissos (2008) xiv–xvii and Stover (2012a) 7–26, with references). On Aeson as a Stoic hero, see Zissos (2008) 389, who also observes that Alcimede's decision to join her husband in

tyrannical behaviour resulting in political suicides that will ultimately lead to his own ignominious demise offers a mythic parallel for the end of Nero's regime and the hope of a new and better era. The fact that Valerius borrowed the variant does not make it any less mythopoeic; what matters is that the choice serves the larger purpose of creating (*poiesis*) a mythic explanation for the recent regime change.

I would add that, as Aeson and Alcimedea lay dying, Pelias' men dismember their younger son, Promachus, an apparent innovation on Valerius' part, as part of Pelias' vengeance (Val. Fl. 1.823–6); Diodorus and Apollodorus only state that Pelias had him murdered. The dismemberment can be read as 'explaining' Pelias' own demise, prayed for by Aeson before his death (Val. Fl. 1.810–14) and ultimately realised by Medea upon the return of the expedition,²⁶ thus paralleling what Jason and Medea have traditionally done to the latter's brother Absyrtus, and ironically anticipating the killing of a child in retaliation for mistreatment that became a hallmark of Jason's undoing at Medea's hands.²⁷

The Lemnian and Trojan Episodes: More Mythopoeic Anticipation of Flavian Rome

Following Apollonius, Valerius places the sojourn on the island of Lemnos on the way to Colchis. The episode begins by accounting for Vulcan's fondness for the island: the Lemnians welcomed him when he was tossed out of Olympus for trying to help his mother Juno at the time when Jupiter's regime was still new and unsettled (2.82–98),²⁸ although at the time of the Argonautic expedition he exercises complete control of Olympus. If, as most now agree, the poem were written during Vespasian's lifetime (see n. 25), one might reasonably wonder if the divine change of regime that underwent a period of uncertainty, specifically mentioned here, parallels that recently experienced in Rome in 69 CE. The presence of other associations with Roman myth supports such a reading.

death calls to mind comparable spousal suicides during the early Empire ((2008) 393, with references).

26 Hershkowitz (1998b) 16 n. 54 calls attention to the parallelism between the deaths of Promachus and Pelias. On the tradition of cursing one's enemies prior to suicide, see Zissos (2008) 402–3.

27 Zissos (2008) xxxi–xxxii identifies a number of connections between Books 1 and 8, to which we should add the likely murder and dismemberment of Absyrtus, which would respond to that of Promachus, as pointed out by Hershkowitz (1998b) 16 n. 53.

28 See Stover (2012a) 168.

As Hershkowitz demonstrated, Valerius represents Hypsipyle as 'a heroic figure and a role model' ((1998b) 137–8).²⁹ The rescue of her father Thoas from the hands of the Lemnian women recalls Aeneas' rescue of Anchises during Troy's destruction; her hands are called pious (Val. Fl. 2.249) and she is shown supporting her father (2.253), obvious nods to the Trojan myth.³⁰ In Apollonius' account, Hypsipyle set Thoas adrift in a box and he washed up on an island belonging to and named after a nymph Oenoe; the island was later named Sicinus after the son they would produce (Ap. Rhod. 1.620–6). Valerius instead has his Thoas end up in the land of the Taurians (cf. Hyginus, *Fab.* 15), identifying him with the king of the same name in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*. He further exploits the Lemnian king's connection with the cult of Artemis by having Thoas migrate from the Taurian temple to the shrine of Diana Nemorensis near Aricia in the Alban hills (Val. Fl. 2.300–5), thereby bringing a pre-Trojan War figure, piously assisted by his offspring, to Italy in advance of Aeneas. As such, we find our poet again privileging the Argonautic myth supporting the Flavian dynasty over the Trojan cycle that undergirded Julio-Claudian pretensions.

In his telling of Thoas' escape, Valerius has Hypsipyle bring her father to the temple of Bacchus, disguise him as the god, and lead him away from the murderous mayhem into a hideout in the woods (Val. Fl. 2.249–81). From here she brought him to an abandoned ship and consigned him to his fate at sea, which, as mentioned, he survived. In a story featuring a child's assistance of a father in the midst of a conflict that is tantamount to civil war, one has to wonder if Valerius' decision to describe Thoas' salvation by way of disguise was inspired by Domitian's similar escape during the last days of Vitellius' attempt to defeat the supporters of Vespasian in Rome. In his life of Domitian, Suetonius tells us that the future emperor, his father's brother Sabinus and forces loyal to Vespasian were trapped on the Capitoline Hill. Though Sabinus was caught and executed, similar to the male population of Lemnos, Domitian successfully passed through the Vitellian troops dressed as a priest of Isis and crossed the Tiber to safety (Suet. *Dom.* 1.2–3; cf. Tac. *Hist.* 3.74).

The importance of Isis worship in Flavian Rome, owing to the belief that the goddess assisted the acquisition of imperial power by the Flavians,³¹ might also account for Orpheus' song of Io-Isis, unparalleled in earlier Argonautic narratives, following Pollux's defeat of Amycus at Val. Fl. 4.344–421. The context

29 The poet specifically promises her immortality for as long as Rome exists (2.242–6). On Valerius' singular praise of Hypsipyle, see now Gibson (2013) 73–4.

30 On the Lemnian episode, see especially Vessey (1985) and Hershkowitz (1998b) 136–46.

31 See Liebeschuetz (1979) 181.

fully justifies the elegant digression: the journey through the Bosphorus, named in honour of Io's passage through the sea.³² As Valerius notes in his preface to the song, Io was identified as Isis (*illos, Nile, tuis nondum dea gentibus Io | transierat fluctus, unde haec data nomina ponto*, 'those waves, O Nile, Io, not yet a goddess to your peoples, had crossed, whence this name was given to the sea', Val. Fl. 4.346–7). Orpheus repeats the identification near the end of his song, focusing on the goddess' accoutrements: snakes on her crown and sistrum (Val. Fl. 4.417–18). As Murgatroyd ((2009) 209) notes, Io has progressed from humiliating persecution to divine status. The description of the sistrum as *ovanti* at 4.418 is particularly significant, given its association with Roman triumph in war. The inclusion of Io's story functions not merely as a reprise of Ovid's narrative of the same (*Met.* 1.588–747), it also provides a mythological parallel to the Augustan myth. Just as Juno harassed Aeneas in the *Aeneid*, in Orpheus' song Juno torments the young woman who would become a great goddess, one favouring and favoured by the Flavians, who similarly faced significant opposition on their path towards imperial domination and, in the case of Vespasian and Titus, eventual apotheosis.

In sum, focus in the Lemnian episode on regime change, Aeneas-like *pietas*, migration to Italy and religious disguise would appear to offer mythological parallels, and thus mythic explanation, for the rise of the Flavian *gens* through the pre-Trojan Argonautic narrative. Once again the poet manoeuvres around the Julio-Claudian myth so firmly established by Virgil, whose epic Valerius evokes everywhere.

Within the same book, Valerius includes the story of Hercules' defeat of the sea monster that ravaged Troy and King Laomedon's offer of the horses given to him by Jupiter to the one who defeated the monster (Val. Fl. 2.451–578). According to Hellanicus (*FGrHist* 4 F 26b), the monster served as reprisal from Poseidon for Laomedon's refusal to pay for the building of the walls of Troy, the same thing that the Trojan king attempts to do to Hercules following his successful defeat of the monster. Although Diodorus Siculus appears to be the first to link Hercules' encounter with Hesione and Laomedon to the Argonautic expedition (4.42),³³ Valerius' inclusion of the episode, not found in Apollonius,

32 On its relevance to the poem as a whole, see Murgatroyd (2009) 177–8 with references to earlier discussions; see also Heerink (2013) 274–6 for its Callimachean agenda. As Zissos (2005) 506–7 also points out, the Io story (among other episodes) is framed by references to the liberation of Prometheus, thus underscoring the theme of 'civilizing progress' that would appear to support the sense of optimism in the early years of the Flavian regime. On the importance of the Prometheus sequence in the epic, see Zissos (2004d) 331–7.

33 See Zissos (2005) 506.

underscores this as the primary event that leads to the ultimate destruction of Troy and the founding of Rome:

namque bis Herculeis deberi Pergama telis
audierat. Priami sed quis iam vertere regnis
fata queat? manet immotis nox duria lustris
et genus Aeneadum et Troiae melioris honores.

For he [sc. Laomedon] had heard that Troy was owed to Herculean weapons twice. But who could avert destruction from Priam's kingdom? A wooden night awaits in a certain future, the race of the Aeneadae and the glory of a better Troy.
(Val. Fl. 2.570–3)

In Valerius' epic, anticipation of a 'better Troy' predates the second Trojan War and, what is more, is associated in both instances with the Colchis-bound Hercules, thus subtly but clearly connecting the future rise of Rome with the Argonautic expedition; what is more, even the second and more famous war is identified with Hercules by way of allusion to the need for his bow. The reapplication of traditional material, seen as a hallmark of pre-literate folktales and myth, as Burkert argued, once again lies at the heart of the poet's mythopoeic enterprise.

The Myth of Fraternal Strife

I offer one final example of Valerian mythopoeic innovation. Post-Apollonian sources mention that Aeetes had a brother, Perses, who sometime after Medea's departure with Jason assumed the throne. When Medea was forced to leave Athens, either Medea or her son Medus (a son fathered either by Aegeus or a local king) killed Perses and restored Aeetes to power (Diodorus 4.56.1, Apollodorus 1.9.28, Hyginus, *Fab.* 27).³⁴ None of these accounts nor any others have the Argonauts intervene in this Colchian affair, set long after the completion of the expedition. Taking his cue from Apollonius, who has his Jason offer Aeetes assistance in his war with the Sauromatae (3.392–5),³⁵ Valerius moves

34 Zissos (2008) xxi n. 56 adds Pacuvius' *Medus* (218–41 Ribbeck) to the list.

35 Noted by Feeney (1991) 325 n. 40 and Wijsman (2000b) 2. Clauss (2012) 428–9 points out that Apollonius likely borrowed the idea of offering mercenary service in return for a favour from several scenes in Xenophon's *Anabasis*.

the conflict forward in time and raises it to the level of full civil war, which provides the topic for Book 6.

The theme of fraternal strife is common in myths of all cultures, including the Argonautic tradition (in particular the conflict between Aeson and Pelias), so it is not surprising per se that Valerius, who demonstrates remarkable freedom in manipulating the Argonautic myth in general, should have decided to have the brotherly conflict in Iolcus re-emerge in Colchian politics at the time of Jason's arrival. Inasmuch as Aeetes repeats the imposition of an impossible mission, mirroring Pelias' demand, the poet augments the similarity between evil despots.³⁶ As scholars have noted, the theme of fraternal strife interested other writers of Flavian Rome, particularly Statius in his *Thebaid*, as a mythic reflection of recent civil strife;³⁷ Roman fascination with this theme can of course be traced back to their founding myth. That said, what makes the adaptation of this age-old motif so interesting is not only the clever innovation following the Apollonian Jason's suggestion of an offer to fight Aeetes' enemies, the opportunity to engage in an Iliadic narrative in Book 6 (the inclusion of a *teichoskopia* involving Medea was particularly brilliant),³⁸ the increased darkening of an already evil tyrant, and a reflection on civil war in the aftermath of the most recent example in Rome, *inter alia*. Rather, the focus on fraternal strife, both in Iolcus and Colchis, stands in stark contrast to the amicable relationship between Titus and Domitian, such that the younger brother is represented as eager to celebrate the martial achievements of his older brother.³⁹ The manipulation of the mythic tradition yet again serves a propagandising purpose. The new regime in Rome, celebrated in the preface of the epic, in contrast to the tyrannical rule of Pelias in Iolcus and Aeetes in Colchis, offers the promise of fraternal, and for that very reason civil, harmony. While that promise ultimately failed under Domitian, during Vespasian's rule the familial concord must have appeared strikingly refreshing in the wake of the shocking, even impious, behaviour of the last Julio-Claudian emperors, whose despotic rule made them unsuitable for continued sway over the world, as Valerius' Jupiter might have had in mind.

36 On the many and remarkable parallels between Pelias and Aeetes, see Zissos (2008) xxxi.

37 On the interrelationship of these two poems, see for example Feeney (1991) 314; on Valerius' influence on other contemporary writers of epic, see Zissos (2006b) 166–7; on the topic of Valerius' interest in mythic civil war as a reflection of recent history, see especially McGuire (1997) 103–13, Wijsman (2000b) 1 and Stover (2012a) 113–50.

38 Regarding Book 6 in general, see Baier (1998), Wijsman (2000b) and Baier (2001); on the *teichoskopia* scene in particular, see Fucecchi (1997), Lovatt (2006) 67–78, Stover (2012a) 207–216, and most recently Augoustakis (2013b) 158–64.

39 Feeney (1991) 335 underscores Valerius' stress on the harmonious relationship of the Flavian family in contrast to the chaos under Nero; cf. Zissos (2008) xv and 84.

Conclusion

If we look at Valerius' *Argonautica* not only as a poem of reception and an intertextual tour de force but also as an attempt to situate the new regime within universal history, and by so doing to account for its emergence and heroic aspirations by way of manipulating traditional mythic tales, we can find in the Flavian epic a genuine mythopoeic enterprise. In his discussion of the conflict between primitivism and progressivism in Valerius' *Argonautica*, Zissos ((2006a) 95) notes that these contrasting theories of history 'enable a society or social group to locate itself in the present by defining a relationship to both a past and a future'. In other words, as mentioned near the beginning of this chapter, we are looking at a 'serious concern with accounting for critical cultural issues of the storytellers by way of adapting traditional tales in order to gain understanding or offer new interpretations of the issues at stake'. More succinctly, what we encounter in Valerius' *Argonautica* is myth in the making.

War and Love in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Marco Fucecchi

Introduction

One of the most important literary features of Valerius Flaccus' epic is the peculiar interaction between war and love. In this new Latin version of the saga, the two themes, which in Apollonius' *Argonautica* are reciprocally exclusive, manage to co-exist and activate a dialectical relationship. Indeed, the Flavian poet largely draws upon the Homeric and Virgilian tradition in order to 'rectify' the anti-belligerent character of the Argonautic myth, as established by his Alexandrian exemplary-model. Therefore, war receives more exposure (though not always in canonical ways), often manifesting itself in unexpected forms, even in connection with love (e.g. Venus' 'war' in Lemnos). This does not mean that the fundamental narrative outcomes are affected by war. Passionate love still remains the key factor in the plot, but it also undergoes a process of deconstruction. As a result of the intense manipulation of the human will (Medea's) by an oppressive system of power (represented by Juno and Venus), love risks losing its autonomy as aesthetic category. Besides Medea's tragic inner conflict, the text highlights the external causation of her passion, which will become the 'unconventional weapon' allowing Jason to achieve his goals.

By exploiting the archetypal character of the Argonautic myth, Valerius Flaccus reconstructs a belated background to his great epic models, thought of as 'descendants' of his (epigonic) poem, via a selection of topical features.¹ In this affectedly primeval context, where roles and hierarchies are still fluid and unstable,² war and love negotiate their respective domains and competences. The privileged place of war³ may be considered an indirect 'post-modern'

1 This also brings about the revival of Homeric elements discarded by Virgil (e.g. the *teichoskopia*). See also Deremetz in this volume.

2 Essays of cosmological poetry stand alongside digressions about 'original wars' (Gigantomachy and Centauromachy).

3 Buckley (2010) is an up-to-date evaluation of the *Kriegsthema* in Valerius' poem, with particular reference to the Colchian war in Book 6: a war which oscillates between the two poles of *bellum civile* and *bellum externum* and aims to provide a (belated) background to the Homeric-Virgilian tradition.

response to Ovid's provocative rereading of the Homeric and Virgilian poems *sub specie amoris*:⁴ if 'pure war-epic' does not exist, the same is true (*a fortiori*) of 'epic without war'.

However, Valerius' aim is not to deny the force of love as a literary device altogether. At the core of the war narrative (Book 6), a decisive event takes place: Juno asks Venus and Cupid for help, because she knows that Medea's magical power is the only way for Jason to accomplish his mission successfully and return home (6.427–76). The dramatic switch from 'war' to 'love' needs mediation, i.e. the entrance of a character like Medea, who works as the catalyst for this change. But, as we shall see, this is just one link (not even the first) in the long chain of world history, where war and love will repeatedly come face to face.

War and Love between Asia and Europe

The voyage of the first ship is meant to extend the boundaries of the known world, opening a new era. Being uncomfortable with the *otia* of Saturnus' reign (1.500), Jupiter invites the most valiant men to emulate his own *virtus* in gaining supreme power and participate in a competition for glory.⁵

Recovering the Golden Fleece is Jason's official task. However, according to Jupiter's plan, the effective goal of the Argonautic expedition is to launch a historical process which will shift world supremacy from Asia to Greece (*accelerat sed summa dies Asiamque labantem | linquimus et poscunt iam me sua tempora Grai*, 'but now her last day is hastening on and we are leaving Asia tottering to her fall, while the Greeks now claim of me their time', 1.542–3).⁶ Consequently, the voyage will also pave the way to war (*via facta per undas | perque hiemes, Bellona, tibi*, 'for you, Bellona, has a path been fashioned through the billows and through storms', 1.545–6), as well as to love: the seduction and the abduction of a girl will be the starting point of an international feud culminating with the Trojan War (*propiorque ex virgine rapta | ille dolor*, 'the still closer pang

4 Ov. *Tr.* 2.255–62, 317ff. and esp. 371–80, 533–6.

5 1.563–7 (with Zissos (2008) 323–5). The king of the gods has to deal with some internal opposition to his 'imperialistic' plan (Sun: 1.503–27; Neptune: 4.118–30, but see also 1.642–50; Mars: 1.528–9; 5.624–48 etc.), but does not seem worried about that. On Jupiter's prophecy and its intertextual implications, see Stover (2012a) 42–6.

6 Translations of Valerius' *Argonautica* are adapted from Mozley (1934).

that comes from a ravished maid', 1.547–8).⁷ Jupiter's first words establish a causal relationship between Jason's enterprise and the fall of Troy, as the limits of a time span which will grant primacy to Greece, and enact the confrontation between war and love within this 'imperial' reading of the Argonautic saga.

Almost at the end of Valerius' text, the sudden approach of the Colchian fleet headed by Absyrtus endangers the accomplishment of Jason's mission as well as Fate's design (8.259–84).⁸ In fact, neither the Golden Fleece nor Medea is among Absyrtus' main concerns: indeed, he does not ask about them at all (*nec quaero vellera nec te | accipio, germana, datam*, 'I seek not the fleece, nor do I take you, sister, as gift', 8.270–1). His pretentious ambition to take revenge on the whole of Greece⁹ prefigures—though from the opposite side—the Achaean expedition against Troy and stands as a further vehicle of tragic irony.

In another respect, Absyrtus' idiosyncratic project is also a fanciful way of anticipating the future (unsuccessful) revenge attempt from the East, the Persian campaign against Greece. Absyrtus' will to accelerate time (*hanc, o siquis vobis dolor iraque, Colchi, | accelerate viam*, 'on with you, Colchians, if ye have any grief or anger, hasten speed', 8.264–5) is completely at odds with Jupiter's plan, which envisages Asia's rapid decline (*accelerat sed summa dies* etc., 1.542–3, see above): the Colchian prince seems about to anticipate Xerxes' destiny as a victim of history.

The Voyage towards Colchis: Venus as Goddess of Love and War

From the outset of Valerius' poem, war is an essential part of the horizon of expectations.¹⁰ In Book 1 Jason explicitly rejects the perspective of internecine strife and chooses to pursue the dream of glory rather than immediately settle

7 Zissos (2008) 317–22. Afterwards, Jupiter will favour another people, the (unmentioned) Romans. In Hdt. 1.1–4 the series of abductions begins with Io and includes Europa: see below.

8 Lazzarini (2012) 245–61; Pellucchi (2012) 305–27.

9 8.275–6: *te, Graecia fallax, | persequor atque tuis hunc quasso moenibus ignem* ('you, treacherous Greece, you are my quarry, against your walls do I shake this brand'). In Apollonius, Circe blames Medea for her flight and warns her that Aeetes will come to take revenge for Absyrtus' death (Ap. Rhod. 4.740–2); later, when the Colchians reach the Argonauts in Phaeacia and are about to launch the attack, Alcinoos explicitly hints at a future military expedition of Aeetes against Greece (4.1102–3).

10 1.40–1, 100–2, 344–7, 539–41 etc. For the diffused presence of the war theme before the Colchian episode, see Fucecchi (1996) 113–17.

accounts with Pelias the tyrant.¹¹ A war against eastern barbarians is what the protagonist expects to deal with in Colchis, as his own words demonstrate later, before engaging in the nocturnal battle against the Doliones (*vosque, viri, optatos huc adfore credite Colchos*, 'and you, my men, deem that the Colchians we have longed for are upon us', 3.82). After the *infanda proelia* (tragic irony: a 'fraternal' strife against their hosts), Jason expresses regret at such shameful victories (3.300–1), revealing the kind of triumph he is longing for.¹²

The sea voyage narrative also allows us to become familiar with love and its power, no less blind and destructive than that of war. The interaction between these two primeval forces, often provoked by divine anger, leads to explosions of violent passion.¹³ The most impressive case, enacting the osmotic character of this relationship, is the story of Lemnos, the island sacred to Vulcan and detested by Venus (2.82–310).¹⁴ Valerius' account of the massacre of the male population by the women's homicidal fury is much longer than the brief sketch given by Apollonius (1.609–32): it includes the aetiology of Venus' anger, her direct intervention to stir up the Lemnian women's hatred, the detailed narration of the carnage—where Venus plays the role of a *dux*—¹⁵ and finally Hypsipyle's heroic rescue of her old father.¹⁶

Taking advantage of *Fama*'s enthusiastic support,¹⁷ Venus descends to earth to lead an army of furious 'Amazons' (2.134), anxious to take revenge on their husbands and uphold their prerogatives against the Thracian women. At first, disguised as a Lemnian woman named Dryope, she acts as a firebrand and, like a 'teacher of *nefas*', illustrates the plan of attack inspired by love (*magnum*

11 See Stover in this volume.

12 3.306–8; cf. Ap. Rhod. 4.1049b–52. On the Cyzicus episode as a 'civil' war, see Manuwald (1999); Stover (2012a) 126–50.

13 Hercules, for example, is the protagonist of two enterprises, alternately displaying genuine heroic disposition and destructive (though always heroic) frenzy. During a stop at Troy (an episode omitted by Apollonius), he kills a sea monster and saves Hesione's life (2.497–537). Afterwards, the loss of Hylas in Mysia causes his violent fury: the hero immediately thinks of Juno's hostility and becomes a *Hercules furens* (3.581–93).

14 Venus takes revenge on her husband, who detected and punished her adultery with Mars (2.96–8); Poortvliet (1991a).

15 This also prefigures her descent to earth in Book 7, when—disguised as Circe—she will instigate passion as well as thoughts of self-annihilation in Medea's mind (see below): Elm von der Osten (2007). The same episode obviously looks forward to the tragic (extradiegetic) 'killer-role' Medea will play in Corinth.

16 Statius (*Theb.* 5.29–498) engages in a dense intertextual competition with Valerius' account.

17 Venus explicitly asks the goddess to trigger 'war' (2.127–30).

aliquid spirabit amor? 'love shall inspire some mighty deed!', 2.184). As the very wife of Mars (*Mavortia coniunx*, 208),¹⁸ Venus is escorted by personifications of psychic forces like *Pavor*, *Discordia*, *Dolus*, *Rabies* and *Letum*.¹⁹ This new war goddess brandishes the torch commonly used by Bellona to give the signal to fight (*ipsa Venus quassans undantem turbine pinum | adglomerat tenebras pugnaeque accincta trementem | desilit in Lemnon*, 'Venus herself whirling a pine-torch in spires of flame piles gloom on gloom and girt for the fray sweeps down to quivering Lemnos', 2.196–8):²⁰ a passage which can be compared with Sil. *Pun.* 5.220–1: *ipsa, facem quatiens ac flavam sanguine multo | sparsa comam, medias acies Bellona pererrat* ('Bellona herself moved through the centre of the battle, brandishing her torch, and her fair hair was spattered with abundant gore').²¹

In the following scene Venus gives her 'troops' the example, in order to avoid delays (2.211–12).²² The women are compelled to go to their marriage chambers, where 'war' will take the place of 'love' (*tum verbere victas | in thalamos agit et cunctantibus ingerit enses*, 'she drives them before her lash into the chambers, and forces swords into their faltering hands, 214–15). Venus' authoritarian gesture recalls that of the Homeric Aphrodite: at the end of the teichoscopy of *Iliad* 3, the love goddess, in the guise of a spinning woman, forces Helen to fulfil her conjugal duties, taking her to the marriage chamber where Paris is waiting (*Il.* 3.424–5). Enslaved by Aphrodite, the frustrated Helen enters the room and rails against Paris, because... he has not been killed by Menelaus in battle (428–9).²³

18 The 'focalised' expression stresses Venus' warlike character as well as her discontent about the marriage with Vulcan (and her hatred for Lemnos).

19 Many of them feature among the traditional followers of Mars (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 4.440: *Deimos*, *Phobos*, *Eris*).

20 See already Venus' first appearance in the poem at 2.105: *pinum... sonantem*, 'crakling torch'.

21 Cf. also Stat. *Theb.* 4.5–6 (with Elm von der Osten (2007) 31–3). By contrast, according to Juno's wish in *Aen.* 7.319, Lavinia will have the war goddess Bellona—not Venus—as *pronuba* carrying the *faces nuptiales* (the same inversion at Stat. *Ach.* 1.33). In Valerius' passage Bellona appears a few lines later (2.227–8), where the Lemnian women are compared to her (and the Eumenides).

22 The goddess' trick (she imitates the laments of the victims) may vaguely remind us of the anecdote regarding Helen who, at Troy, went round, calling the different chiefs inside the wooden horse and imitating the voices of each of their wives (Hom. *Od.* 4.277ff.).

23 In Book 7 of the *Argonautica*, after her own teichoscopy, Medea will be the object of a similar 'enslavement' by Venus: when the 'battle' against passion is definitively lost, the Colchian princess surrenders (*te ducente sequor... monitis cedo minor*, 'where thou

The Trojan pattern emerges further in the slaughter scene, entirely modelled upon the Virgilian account of the city's last night: from the killing of the men, asleep or numb with fear, to the final rescue of Thoas by his daughter Hypsipyle (2.216–310).²⁴ The girl becomes the protagonist of the only 'positive' *aristeia* within such a cruel spectacle, the very model of a 'civilised heroism' that is to be opposed to the accomplishment of Venus' revenge.

The goddess' behaviour is an overlap of erotic and warlike elements, a true synthesis of *amor* and *arma*, and almost an indirect response to the question posed by the poet of the *Amores* (*quid, si praeripiat flavae Venus arma Minervae, | ventilet accensas flava Minerva faces?* 'What if Venus snatched golden Minerva's weapons, while golden Minerva fanned the flaming fires?', *Ov. Am.* 1.1.7–8). Valerius' Venus has effectively stolen Minerva's weapons (together with Bellona's torch and the barbaric fury of Mars himself), but whereas she suffered painful wounds when meddling with a true heroic war (in *Iliad* 5), she does not take the same risk on Lemnos.

Afterwards, when the Argo lands on the island, Venus accepts to be appeased (somewhat of a paradox) by her own husband, *Mulciber* (2.314): she is ready to return to her normal job, making the Lemnian women fall in love with the Greek hosts (2.353–6).

War (and Love) in Colchis

Prologue: Book 5

The 'proem in the middle',²⁵ which opens the poem's second part, announces 'war' (*bella*, 5.218; *proelia*, 221). As regards 'love', the passage only seems to point to its demonic connotation (*furias*, 219) and evil consequences: the 'unspeakable' pact between Jason and the tyrant's daughter (*infandaque natae | foedera*, 219–20), whose frightening power is epitomised by the image of a trembling ship.²⁶ The (momentary) pre-eminence of war is the more evident because there is not the slightest tribute to Erato, the muse of love invoked in the proem at the beginning of Book 3 of Apollonius' *Argonautica* and formally addressed as well in the 'middle-proem' of the *Aeneid*, where she is paradoxically asked

leadest I will follow ... in my youthfulness I yield to your counsels', 7.348) and commits herself to the evil goddess, who accompanies her to Jason (373).

24 The influence of *Aeneid* 2 on Valerius' narrative is exhaustively analysed in Poortvliet (1991a) 136–79 *ad loc.*

25 Conte (1984) 121–33 (English translation in Conte (1992)).

26 Wijsman (1996) 125–7.

to remind the narrator about war (*tu vatem, tu, diva, mone. dicam horrida bella* etc., 'You, goddess, you must prompt your poet. I'll tell of brutal war . . .', Virg. *Aen.* 7.41).

Erato's absence from this second proem (and from Valerius' poem altogether) is no exception *per se*²⁷ and could also be considered a further, indirect, anticipation of the incoming war: a war which does not find parallels in other sources of the saga and has to represent programmatically the core of an 'Iliadic second half' of the poem (as happens in the *Aeneid*). Contrary to the *Aeneid*, in the new Roman *Argonautica* (fraternal) war is already a matter of fact when the Argo lands in Colchis: Jason has to take part in it and make a difficult choice.²⁸ King Aeetes, as the owner of Phrixus' Golden Fleece, is his natural interlocutor, whose eventual hostility is to be tackled at any cost.²⁹ On the other hand, the king's brother, Perses, who leads an impressive army of Scythians, Hyrcanians and other tribes, has vainly tried to persuade Aeetes to give up the Fleece. The latter, however, is not frightened of the negative prodigies, because the shade of Phrixus has summoned him to keep that very talisman of power (5.233–40). Apart from Juno's previous anticipation (see n. 28), logic itself would drive Jason towards Perses. Soon after, however, we are informed that the goddess herself has disposed otherwise: the Greeks will participate in the fighting, but as allies of Aeetes (*stat pectore fixum | Aeetae sociare manus*, 'my mind is resolved to join Aeetes' host', 5.288–9).³⁰ Furthermore, Jason has already been told by Phineus that he would help the Colchians, not fight against them (*ipse truces illic Colchos hostemque iuvabis | auxiliis*, 'you will help with your aid the fierce Colchians and your foe', 4.618–19).³¹

27 Indeed, no Muse is named in the Flavian *Argonautica*, not even the epic Muse Calliope (*contra*, cf. Virg. *Aen.* 9.525).

28 The 'choice-problem' is thematised early on, when Juno sends Pallas to reassure Perses (who is already moving his troops: 3.493–4) of the imminent arrival of the external powerful allies (3.487–508, esp. 504–5: *sponde adfore reges | dis genitos, quis arma volens, quis agmina iungat*, 'promise him that god-descended princes will come to his aid, with whom he may if he will join forces and armament of war').

29 Even by engaging in war (3.82, quoted on p. 118 above). However, it is still uncertain at that point in the narrative if and how such an expectation will become reality.

30 Once informed of this strange alliance, Perses unsuccessfully tries to upset it by warning Jason against Aeetes' disloyalty (6.14–26, esp. 22–3: *neque enim Aeetae promissa fidemque | esse loco*, 'for no surety was there in Aeetes' word and promise'). In fact, Aeetes will not keep faith with the promise of giving back the Golden Fleece to his Greek allies (7.32–77).

31 In Apollonius' *Argonautica* Argus, a son of Phrixus (3.350–3), and then Jason himself (3.392–5) offer Aeetes a mutually advantageous exchange. In order to obtain the

To sum up, by enriching the Argonautic myth with the Colchian war and, generally, leaving more room for war narratives, Valerius contaminates the Hellenistic plot with the Virgilian reception of the more ancient (i.e. Homeric) epic tradition: after the (first recorded) sea voyage, the heroes have to undergo a war. This circumstance is apparently meant to sanction the ‘inevitability’ of war within such a primitive epic universe. However, the war itself will not cause traumatic changes in the following development of events: Jason is expected to approach Aeetes and become the victim of his rage (and *perfidia*); therefore, Medea’s help, and not his own heroic prowess, will still lead Jason to the conquest of the Golden Fleece. So when Juno apparently changes her mind and prevents the Greek hero from taking Perses’ side, she actually chooses the better way to reach an acceptable compromise with the Argonautic tradition. That is why, for the moment at least, Perses’ attack will only cause some delay:³² the narrative function of this (tragic-)heroic character is no more essential than that of Styrrus, the foreign suitor Aeetes has chosen for Medea on Phrixus’ advice.³³

Thus, if the alliance between Jason and Aeetes looks awkward,³⁴ the same could be said of its ‘military’ target: Juno is aware that she will have to resort

Golden Fleece, the Greeks are ready to subjugate the Sauromatae to Colchis. But in the Alexandrian poem such a possibility remains undeveloped.

- 32 In fact it is only after Medea has left Colchis that Perses will succeed in conquering Aea and dethrone Aeetes. This also means that his present defeat is not decisive (as anticipated by Jupiter’s words at 5.678–9: *sit Persen pepulisse satis* etc., ‘let it suffice to have routed Perses’). As regards Aeetes, he needs to wait for Medea’s return from Greece in order to take his revenge. On these later developments and Valerius’ anticipation of them, see Zissos (2012) 96–8.
- 33 *praeterea infernae quae nunc sacrata Dianae | fert castos Medea choro, quemcumque procorum | pacta petat, maneat regnis ne virgo paternis* (‘moreover, Medea, who now is consecrated to Diana of the underworld and leads the holy dance—let her look for betrothal to any suitor, suffer her not to abide in her father’s kingdom’, 5.238–40). Jason’s presence apparently causes another problem of choice, for Aeetes this time: who is to be the prophesied foreign husband suitable for Medea? The answer, however, is easy for the tyrant who only cares about the Fleece. To solve the problem too easily, almost in haste, is Aeetes’ fatal error: was it induced by the ambiguity of Phrixus’ words, where Medea’s destiny occupies a secondary place (*praeterea*, 5.238)? By contrast, the Virgilian oracle of Faunus (*Aen.* 7.96–101) was centred on Lavinia’s marriage.
- 34 In fact, Perses could have been a more sympathetic ally for Jason. Nonetheless, Jason’s choice (driven by Juno’s will) cannot be necessarily considered a ‘diplomatic’ error altogether (Fucecchi (2006) 12–15)—to take sides with the king of Colchis gives Jason the opportunity to gain the support of a more powerful ally than Aeetes: that of his daughter, Medea.

to unheroic devices in order to drive her *protégé* towards success.³⁵ War can only provide the context where the development of love, or rather its peculiar elaboration, will take place. Therefore, as internal master of the narrative plot, the great goddess takes advantage of the first 'Homeric' encounter between Jason and Medea, outside the city walls, near the river Phasis, where the girl is looking for relief after perturbing nightmares (5.329–42). Her strategy consists in enacting the erotic potential of famous models, first of all the encounter between Odysseus and Nausicaa in *Odyssey* 6. At the sight of the strangers, Medea's instinctive fear is tempered by the nurse's words, rich in tragic irony: they are Greeks, there is nothing to fear (5.359–60). Then Valerius anticipates the topic of the destructive force of Jason's beauty, intentionally enhanced by Juno (5.363–72, esp. 368–72). The famous simile likening the Greek hero to Sirius, the Dog Star, was also used by Apollonius to introduce the encounter, which took place there, however, *after* Jason's visit to Aeetes and Medea's falling in love.³⁶

The new scene outlines some basic features of the two protagonists. After displaying self-confidence and optimism about Aeetes' answer (*adnuet ipse, reor*, 'he will agree, I think', 5.320; *rebus semper pudor absit in artis*, 'away with scruple in adversity!', 324), Jason—as the leader of a military embassy (and not a castaway like Odysseus)—immediately recognises the 'leader' of the feminine company he comes across while making for Aea (*ducem dominamque*, 377) and exploits the arts of oratorical seduction, mobilising his diplomatic talent and the apparatus of flattering topoi (378–90; cf. Hom. *Od.* 6.153 ff.).³⁷ On the other hand, the Colchian princess fears for her safety (5.373): though being fascinated by the hero's virile beauty (375), she shows the signs of virginal *pudor* and can actually play no more than an informative role.

Thus, for the moment at least, the 'hierarchies' of the Homeric model seem almost upset. Medea's last warning (*ingentia namque | castra alios aditus atque impius obsidet hostis*, 'for the other approaches are blocked by a huge camp and a traitor foe', 5.395–6) introduces Jason into the context of the Colchian

35 After reproaching Juno for having averted Hercules, i.e. the only hero whose help could have been decisive in case of war, from the Argonauts (4.7–10), Jupiter predicts that she will have to take other roads (*i, Furias Veneremque move* etc., 'go, stir up the Furies and Venus', 4.13).

36 Ap. Rhod. 3.956–61. For another occurrence of the topos in Valerius' poem, cf. 6.606–7 (see below in the text). The protagonist of the *Odyssey* looks ugly to Nausicaa (*Od.* 6.242): instead of increasing the hero's beauty, Athena previously intervenes to infuse the girl with courage (139–40).

37 According to Stover (2003) Jason's masculinity is also downplayed/ 'elegized' in the meeting scene (see also Heerink (forthcoming a)).

war, which will grant him the opportunity to show heroic endurance as well as his political sensitivity.³⁸ At the same time, however, Medea herself leaves the background for the first time. From now on, the young princess, driven by divine influence, progressively abandons her timidity and undergoes an important evolution as literary character. After being an emotionally involved attender of the war spectacle, she will become an effective protagonist of the epic action.

War and Love: The Teichoskopy of Book 6

During the ensuing Olympian banquet, Jupiter brings to an end yet another quarrel between Mars and Pallas (5.673–89). In fact, the king of the gods seems mostly interested in maintaining the provisional outcome of the war: after an initial defeat, due to Jason's contribution, Perses will dethrone Aeetes, at least until Medea's return (see n. 32 above). On his part, Mars is afraid that he might lose the Golden Fleece, which Aeetes has consecrated to him. The warlike god could never have thought of Aeetes as Jason's ally: rather he expected to face Perses and the Greek heroes as his natural enemies (*non opus auxilio Colchis nec foedere vestro: | et Persen simul et Minyas deposcimus hostes*, 'the Colchians have no need of aid or of your alliance: we claim both Perses and the Minyae as foes', 5.633–4).³⁹

For that reason, at the beginning of Book 6—while the other gods are asleep—Mars is awake (*vigil*, 1) and completely disoriented (*nec quas acies, quae castra sequatur | invenit...*, 'yet knows he not which camp, which battle-array to join...', 2–3): he wishes to trigger this 'unprecedented' war, but really does not understand which side to take.⁴⁰ Unaware of the consequences of his action, Mars stirs up a fight (the only thing he can do), which actually inhibits Perses' attempt to persuade Jason not to fight him against his own interests.⁴¹ By contrast, Pallas shows how to take advantage of the war. After

38 *'ergo nec hic nostris derat labor arduus actis' | ... | ... veniant super haec quoque fato | bella meo* ('"this hard task also then was among our destined deeds ... let then this war too be added to my fate"', 5.542–5). In this last passage Jason's voice seems to display metaliterary awareness of the unprecedented nature of such a war, which does represent an *unicum* in his (mostly unheroic) career as a literary character. For Jason's heroic self-awareness, see also 5.495–6, 501–2 and 508–9. As regards Jason's diplomatic attitude, e.g. 5.495–6, 501–2, 508–9 and, more indirectly, Pallas' words at 5.662–4.

39 Fucecchi (2004) 112–14.

40 For the label of 'unprecedented war' applied to the Colchian conflict narrated by Valerius, see above, n. 38.

41 Fucecchi (2004) 115–26. The disoriented Mars of the beginning of Book 6 (see above in the text) is at odds with that of *Iliad* 2, where Zeus rather plays the trickster sending Agamemnon a deceitful dream (*Il.* 2.1–15).

the sympotic quarrel of Book 5, she does not react to Mars' further provocation, as often happens in Homer: rather, she conforms to Jupiter's will and her interventions—at the middle (396–8) and at the end (739–46) of Book 6—sanction her role as 'the guardian of war'.

The turning point comes almost at the centre of the book (6.427), when Juno changes the scenario: if war does not serve Jason's purpose (*non hanc ad vellera cernens | esse viam nec sic reditus . . . parandos*, 'seeing that this is no way for Aesonides to win the fleece or accomplish his return', 429–30), at least it will provide the setting for the intervention of a precious ally: Medea.⁴² The war which 'should not have taken place' (and which the Argonauts seem to fight on the wrong side) is turned into a narrative device aimed at favouring Medea's involvement in Jason's destiny.⁴³ When Juno, disguised as Medea's sister Chalciope, descends from heaven with Venus' weapons (*cingulum amoris*, the Homeric *κεστός*, a 'girdle', or more probably a 'necklace' according to Valerius)⁴⁴ and takes the princess to the city walls (6.477–94), everything begins to change. Juno/Chalciope and Medea participate in a Homeric *teichoskopia* (cf. *Il.* 3.146–244), where the 'continuous' mode of narration is abandoned for a technique of scene shifting, which pinpoints two different planes of representation: the battlefield, where Jason (who is not mentioned in the first half) progressively assumes the primary role, and the city walls, where Medea is familiarising herself with the heroic-epic universe.⁴⁵

The war itself thus evolves into pure spectacle: the increasing influence of internal focalisation causes progressive diminution of narrative objectivity and the initial gap between the two planes is gradually bridged. The dialogues and comments of Juno and Medea break the flow of narration, while the battlefield now appears to be populated by figures from Medea's emotional world, which have been marginalised or rather ignored so far. After the long series of unknown and exotic names which characterises the first half of Book 6, we finally see, in a first relatively long battle narrative (6.507–74), Medea's brother

42 *Iuno duci sociam coniungere quaerit Achivo* ('her therefore would Juno fain join in alliance with the Achaean leader', 6.450) oscillates ambiguously between the picture of a politico-military pact and that of an erotic union.

43 Feeney (1991) 325–6.

44 Cf. 6.668–9, where Medea *interdum blandae derepta monilia divae | contrectat miseroque aptat flagrantia collo* ('at whiles she fingers the necklace plucked from the winsome goddess, and fits it, flashing fire, about her hapless neck').

45 The (focalised) narrative and the sequences of dialogue, which take place on the walls (503–6, 575–608, 657–89, 717–20), frame the battle narrative sections (507–74, 609–56, 690–716); see Fucecchi (1996) 142–65.

Absyrtus (517–23), the sons of Phrixus and Chalciope (542–6), and finally Jason himself (546–52), among others.⁴⁶

A different compositional strategy characterises the second part of the teichoskopy (575–656), which is influenced even more directly by Medea's subjective perception of the spectacle. When the Colchian princess focuses on the man she met at the river (6.579), the emotional rapture with which her gaze pursues the warrior across the field transforms the battle narrative into an individual *aristeia*, blurring the boundaries between reality and hallucination.⁴⁷ While following Jason's extraordinary deeds through Medea's fascinated eyes, the reader is invited to share her astonishment.⁴⁸ But, in this metaphorical pursuit, the 'huntress' soon becomes prey (584–6): Medea is no longer able to find familiar *insignia*—Jason meets her eyes everywhere and, like a terrible hunter (*saevus . . . solusque*, 586), seems almost to prevent them from wandering freely throughout the battlefield.

By now, however, the girl's initial fear has become curiosity, as the series of urgent questions to Chalciope/Juno demonstrates (588–90: 'who's that man?' etc.). This search for her sister's complicity (589–90) expresses psychological subordination: the dialogue reveals a conflict between the subjective need for self-determination and the objective impotence to achieve it. Medea's condition of inferiority, at this point, is also stressed by the fact that Jason is explicitly said to perceive Juno's intervention, which renders him 'stronger and bigger' (6.609–14, esp. 609–10: *nec sua Crethiden latuit dea vimque recentem | sentit agi membris ac se super agmina tollit*, 'nor was Crethides blind to his own goddess, but felt the new strength working in his limbs and rears himself up above the host'). The impression that we are dealing with a real 'metamorphosis' here is corroborated by the chain of metaphors and similes: the hero is respectively compared to the Dog Star and the comets (606–8),⁴⁹ to the huge Caucasus

46 Before entering the battle narrative in the proper sense, Jason plays a role that exalts his diplomatic rather than his heroic qualities in the strict sense, when he praises the *virtus* displayed by the sons of Phrixus, emblem of interethnic solidarity (6.547–9).

47 See esp. 580–3: *huc oculos sensusque refert animumque faventem, | nunc quo se raperet, nunc quo diversus abiret | ante videns, quotque unus equos, quot funderet arma | errantesque viros quam densis sisteret hastis* ('(Medea) hither turns her eager eyes and senses and favouring mind, picturing beforehand now whither he would dash, now to what other part he would ride off, and how many steeds, how many weapons he would strike down alone, and with what hail of spears he would bring roaming warriors to a halt'). On Medea's looking out from the walls, see Lovatt (2006) 67–81 and (2013) 239–40.

48 However, if he is familiar with the Apollonian *Argonautica*, the reader himself may also be surprised at this typically 'heroic' (i.e. Homeric) attitude manifested by Valerius' Jason.

49 For the second time: cf. 5.368–72 and see above p. 123 in the text and n. 36.

(611–12) and to a bloodthirsty lion (613–14). The battle narrative, in the proper sense, is reduced to the account of Jason's *aristeia*, which culminates in the killing of Colaxes, probably one of Jupiter's less-known sons (609–56).

A further shift of perspective brings us back again on the city walls and inaugurates the third part of the *teichoskopy* (657–89). After rapidly pointing at Medea's monomaniacal gaze,⁵⁰ this section mostly concentrates on the girl's internal conflict. Passion competes with the repressive urges of *pudor* and, finally, Medea seems more willing to surrender to the impulse than to maintain rational self-control. She declines to doubt the declared identity of her malicious interlocutrix and, paradoxically, shows great firmness in resisting self-censorship (*nec credere falsos | audet atrox vultus eademque in gaudia rursus | labitur et saevae trahitur dulcedine flammae*, 'nor dares she, with formidable tenacity, deem that countenance false, but yields again to the same entrancing fancies and is drawn on by the sweetness of the cruel flame', 661–3). When she avidly handles Juno's ornaments (668–74: Venus' *cingulum* among them), moral scruples are temporarily overcome (*extremus roseo pudor errat in ore*, 'the last remnant of shame hovers in the blushes of her cheek', 674).

At this point, the false sister, who meanwhile had become a passive partner, leaves Medea alone, even without answering her last questions (675–80). The girl appears physically drawn towards the battlefield, almost ready to 'enter the fight' at Jason's side (*imminet e celsis audentius improba muris*, 'more boldly now leans the reckless girl from the high walls', 681): she feels the same pains, shares his own risks (*at quotiens vis dura ducum densique repente | Aesoniden pressere viri cumque omnis in unum | imber iit, totiens saxis pulsatur et hastis*, 'so often as the stern violence of the leaders and sudden charge of thronging warriors beset the son of Aeson, and when all the hail of darts converge on him alone, so often does she feel the stones and lances wound her', 683–5).

So, thanks to the typical technique of scene shifting—which gradually transforms war into a mere pretext—the *teichoskopia* literally reduces the distance between the two protagonists. The following battle narrative (690–760) is enriched with occasional references to Medea's sole reason for fear (*unius aegra metu*, 'anxious for one alone', 710; *longum . . . perpessa timorem*, 'her long day of terror over', 754). She is completely indifferent to the horrible death of the young Myraces, a foreign ally of Aeetes (like Jason) who dies before her

50 6.657–8: *at regina virum (neque enim deus amovet ignem) | persequitur lustrans oculisque ardentibus haeret*, 'but the princess with roving gaze follows the hero (for the god quenches not the fire), upon him her burning eyes are ever fixed'.

eyes (690–718).⁵¹ At the end of the book Medea no longer cares about the Colchian war, which has achieved its narrative goal and is ready to leave room for another (more traditional) chapter of the story.

*Defeat of pudor and Victory of Magic: The Two aristeiai of Medea
(Books 7–8)*

While the battle slowly burns out, Medea's night is upset by a 'psychomachy' between the growing passion and the resurgent *pudor*, strengthened by the absence of her beloved (7.1–25). Moreover, Aeetes' daughter is aware of the precarious alliance between her father and Jason, who are soon to become enemies. Therefore, just like another mythical paradigm, Scylla, she feels a traitor to her homeland. This explains why, for a large part of Book 7 at least, her *pudor* is still enhanced by guilty conscience. Medea's obsessive devotion to Aeetes originates from fear rather than filial love.⁵² It is a self-censorship tool, a way of maintaining the veil of dissimulation, which is still operating after Jason's triumph over Aeetes' monsters, when she will be obliged to make a definitive choice between the two.⁵³

Medea's internal conflict represents the main topic of Book 7. Juno is aware that her intervention still did not manage to force Aeetes' daughter to obey the law of *extremus furor* (*his ubi nequiquam nutantem Colchida curis | Iuno videt necdum extremo parere furori* etc., 'when Juno sees the Colchian maid wavering perplexed to no purpose nor yielding yet to the full force of passion' etc., 7.153–4). Thus she resolves to turn again to Venus' support (7.156–88).⁵⁴ The task at hand is to prevail over the 'hard' virginal *pudor* of the sorceress by casting mightier spells on her. For that purpose a stronger force is needed: disguised as Circe, Aeetes' sister and Medea's 'teacher' of magic, Venus displays

51 Perses too leaves the stage: Pallas' final intervention to prevent him from suicide (6.740–51) ensures his future role in the dynastic contest with Aeetes.

52 E.g. *patriae circumfert oscula dextrae* ('covers her father's hand with kisses', 7.123) expresses Medea's instinctive hope to appease her father's anger. Medea's psychic polarisation between Jason and Aeetes is represented through a typical simplification in the language of dreams (*supplex hinc sternitur hospes, hinc pater*, 'on this side the stranger kneels imploring, on that her sire', 7.143–4); see also Zissos (2012) 104–5.

53 At the beginning of Book 8, Medea declares her absolute devotion to her father (8.10–15, esp. 12–13: *ne crede, pater, non carior ille est quem sequimur*, 'nay think it not, father; I love not him whom I follow more than thee'). In fact, this is only a sad farewell: a few lines earlier Medea's resolution to take flight is justified with (or rather veiled behind) her fear of her father's threatening rage (*furiaeque minaeque | patris*, 8.2–3).

54 Cf. 6.455–76 (see above, p. 116). The goddess of love has already played the Fury at Lemnos (see above).

her whole power of seduction and wins over the girl's final resistance (7.210ff.). But it is a hard contest for the goddess to win. At the outset, Medea is not attracted by Venus/Circe's words about universal cosmopolitanism and does not care for her promises of ecumenic prestige (7.227–36).⁵⁵ Rather, showing the absolute devotion of a Roman Vestal virgin, the girl declares fidelity to Hecate's 'national' cult and states she has no plans to marry at all, either in Scythia or anywhere else (7.238–9).⁵⁶

Such a strange 'duel' needs an act of force to be resolved. Erotic madness inspired by Venus (*furialia figit | oscula* 'imprinting kisses that drive to frenzy', 7.254–5) finally manages to overpower Medea's *pudor*, and the frustrated girl seems on the point of reacting in an unorthodox way (*vix animos dextram-que tenens quin ipsa loquentis | iret in ora deae; tanta pudor aestuat ira*, 'she scarce held back her angry hands from flying at the very face of the goddess as she spoke; so wrathful is the tumult of shame within her', 7.293–4). This manifestation of impotence sanctions Medea's defeat, the unlucky outcome of her passive '*aristeia*' (*ergo ubi nescioquo penitus se numine vinci | sentit et abs-cisum quicquid pudor ante monebat* etc., 'when therefore she felt that she was being utterly vanquished by some strange power, and that all shame's former promptings were torn away' etc., 7.323–5).⁵⁷ Now she is ready to obey Venus/Circe (348–9, quoted above, n. 23), whose aim is to involve her in the heroic-epic universe again, as Jason's ally, but much more 'active' than before.

Medea begins to literally 'fight' against her homeland when giving Jason the weapons which will allow him to defeat Aeetes' monsters. The delivery of magic potions (*Titania ... gramina Perseasque ... vires*, 'Titanian herbs and Persean potencies', 7.449) and *carmina* (463–5) already means the defeat of her *pudor* (*non revocabilis umquam | cessit ab ore pudor*, 'irrevocable shame had

55 See Perutelli (1997) 277–84 *ad loc.* Augoustakis (2010a) 1–5 explores the relationship between this passage and the Apollonian intertext (Ap. Rhod. 3.678–80) as well as its cultural implications as 'manifesto' of universalised cosmopolitanism.

56 Hecate is called *Perseis* or *Perseia* (6.495), as the daughter of Perses the titan. Often assimilated to Artemis-Diana (5.238), the goddess is 'specialised' in magic and asked for help by sorceresses. According to a rare tradition, perhaps dating back to Dionysius Scytobrachion, she was the daughter of a king of Tauris named Perses (!), and became Aeetes' cruel wife and mother of Circe and Medea (Diod. 4.45).

57 Medea's awareness of being the instrument of a superior will may recall the scene in *Iliad* 3 (see also above, p. 119) where Helen recognises Aphrodite disguised as the old spinning woman who is bringing her back to the marriage chamber after the teichoscopy. The Spartan heroine vainly tries to rebel against such an authoritarian manifestation of power as well (*Il.* 3.399–420).

gone for ever from her cheeks, 461–2).⁵⁸ However, Valerius goes a step further and highlights Medea's participation as a direct protagonist in Jason's *aristeia*. The Greek hero manages to tame one of the fire-breathing bulls thanks to her (personal) intervention (*sed non incendia Colchis | adspirare sinit clipeoque inluditur ignis | frigidus et viso pallescit flamma veneno*, 'the Colchian suffers not the burning heat to come nigh him, and the fire cools as it rushes upon his shield, and the flame pales when it feels the poisons', 7.584–6), and the monster is said to fight both Jason and Medea (*ille virum atque ipsam tunc te, Medea, recusans | concutit*, 'the bull struggles against the hero and against even thee then, Medea, and would fain shake him off', 589–90). The other bull is then defeated by Medea in person (*alium dehinc turbida Colchis | exarmat lentumque offert timideque minantem | iamque propinquanti noctem[que] implicat*, 'the other bull then does the anxious Colchian rob of his terrors, and brings him to Jason moving slowly and threatening but timidly, and now as he draws near she casts a cloud about him', 596–8). Finally, when the time comes to deal with the earth-born warriors, Jason throws the poisoned helmet into their midst, but it is Medea again who actually seems to turn them against each other (*haud secus accensas subito Medea cohortes | implicat et miseros agit in sua proelia fratres*, 'so Medea suddenly inflames and embroils the cohorts and drives the doomed brothers to fight among themselves', 637–8).⁵⁹

Thus the pattern of Medea's personal intervention, which Apollonius does not properly enact before the episode of the dragon-guardian of the Fleece (Ap. Rhod. 4.156–61), is already exploited by Valerius during Jason's trials in order to increase the girl's heroic quality. The accomplishment of the last enterprise in Colchis, the subjugation of the dragon (8.68–108), gives Medea the opportunity to highlight her multiple decisive contributions, while manifesting incipient signs of a guilty conscience (*patrios exstinxit noxia tauros, | terrigenas in fata dedi: fusum ecce draconis | corpus habes! iamque omne nefas, iam, spero, peregi*, 'my noxious art has quenched my father's bulls, has laid low

58 Medea herself tries to emphasise her contribution to Jason's cause (which surpasses the help he received from Juno and Pallas), in order to 'negotiate' her own future (7.440–4). She does so also by means of magic (*tacitis nam cantibus illum | flexerat et simili iamdudum adflarat amore*, 'with silent magic had she swayed him and inspired long since an answering passion', 7.488–9). However, the omniscient narrator does not fail to stress Medea's condition of inferiority compared to the other's diplomatic skill: Jason's *periuria* will be repaid by a Fury (7.509–10).

59 In this way Medea's dream in Ap. Rhod. 3.623–4 receives narrative reality ('She dreamed that she herself competed against the oxen and very easily performed the task' (tr. Race 2008)). Incidentally, in the Hellenistic poem Medea is the protagonist of another 'personal *aristeia*' against the bronze giant Talus in Crete (Ap. Rhod. 4.1651–88).

the earth-born: lo! there lies the dragon's body at thy feet, and at last—I hope, **at last—I have accomplished** all my deadly deeds', 8.106–8). The epic flavour of Medea's *aristeia* has a paradoxical twist: the monster, which terrifies Jason, is presented as her personal pet; the solemn prayer to the God of Sleep is a substitute for the traditional vows to gods before the battle; the 'heroic' substance consists in performing a magic ritual;⁶⁰ the sad lament over the sleeping dragon takes the place of the traditional *euchos* of the epic winner.⁶¹

To sum up, after the inevitable defeat of her *pudor*, Medea's new epic profile consists of an 'active' kind of heroism involving her magic. Owing to her direct contribution, the Greek hero achieves his goals and is true to his status. However, Medea is anything but comfortable with her partner, to whom she is bound by a controversial erotic passion and who is to become her tragic adversary.

The Menace of a Final Battle and the End of the Text (Book 8)

The text of the *Argonautica* stops when another battle is about to break out between the Argonauts and their previous 'allies', the Colchians, who reach Jason and Medea when they are celebrating their marriage on the island of Peuce. Besides their leader Absyrtus, whose words—as we have seen above (p. 117)—open up awkward perspectives on world history, there is also Medea's betrothed, Styrrus, whom we have already met in Book 6, 'the book of war'.⁶² Contrary to Absyrtus' lack of interest in his sister, the Albanian prince still loves the Colchian princess (8.298ff., esp. 300: *coniugio atque iterum sponsae flammatus amore*, 'kindled once again by thought of marriage and desire for

60 Medea's representation as a kind of epic (albeit barbaric) singer (*carmina barbarico fundens pede*, 'pouring forth spells in barbaric rhythm', 8.69) may be considered a further hint at her 'peculiar' heroic dimension: if *carmina* (as 'spells, enchantments') are properly the sorceress' weapons, in epic tradition they also represent—as products of the act of singing—a typical feature of the hero's *otium* (cf. Achilles playing the lyre and singing 'the deeds of men' in Hom. *Il.* 9.189).

61 See esp. 8.99: *nec te saltem, miserande, peremi* ('yet at least, hapless one, I slew thee not!'). Medea's cruelty consists in not killing the guardian of the Fleece, who will no longer find the Fleece when awakened. However, Medea's *aristeia* against the dragon works as a narrative pendant of Hercules slaying the sea monster in Book 2. For Medea's heroic (or, better, 'Herculean') characterisation in the dragon episode, see Castelletti (2012) 155–60.

62 In 6.172 and 265–78 (where even another suitor of Medea, the mysterious Anaisis, appears).

his betrothed').⁶³ She apparently represents his only goal, and we are led to believe that Styrrus probably does not share Absyrtus' delirious project of a large-scale war against the West.

At this point—while Medea finds shelter in a cave, having decided to die in any case—it is Juno who intervenes again to help Jason. In order to prevent a war, the goddess raises a tempest and (unfairly) launches all the winds solely against the Colchian fleet (8.318–27). Styrrus has no time to take his revenge: before reaching his rival in love, he is swallowed up by the waves which he thinks have been raised by Jason's new ally, Medea (8.337–55).⁶⁴ Paradoxically enough, Styrrus dies brandishing his sword as if already fighting in a battle, i.e. the kind of death which the actual victims of a shipwreck would desire (8.360). Probably no battle will have taken place at Peuce, but we already have an important victim all the same.

Absyrtus is then obliged to stop the attack and anchors not far from the Argo, as the war and his ambitions are stalling (*pugnaeque datur non ulla potestas*, 'no chance of battle is given him', 8.381). On the other hand, the Argonauts can sense the decisive moment is near (*tanti . . . ultima belli*, 'the outcome of so bitter a fight', 385) and strongly urge Jason to give Medea back, so as to bring the war to an end (*componere . . . bellum*, 394),⁶⁵ or rather prevent the actual outbreak of war. Mopsus the seer then declares that it is not during this generation of heroes that Asia and Europe will settle their accounts (8.395ff.): Medea is not Helen and Jason is not Paris. However—no less than Absyrtus, who thinks of destroying the Argo as a first step towards the invasion of Greece—Mopsus and the other Argonauts are also to fail in their attempt to change the course of fate: Medea will remain on board the Argo and reach Greece before coming back to Colchis again.

For his part, Jason has to deal with a difficult choice: *fides*, *religio* (8.401–2) and finally even *pudor* (464)⁶⁶ towards Medea (i.e. everything concerning Jason as individual) on the one hand versus his own duties as collective hero,

63 We could say that only those who are not to marry Medea do fight for her love: cf. the case of Anausis (see above, n. 62), who dies in a duel against Styrrus (6.265–78; see Fucecchi (2005)).

64 The ironic allusion to Medea's 'military service' for Jason (after her complicity in overpowering Aetes' monsters in Colchis) is the final point in Styrrus' speech (8.351–5, esp. 353–4: *atque iterum Aesonides, iterum defenditur arte | qua solet?*, 'is Jason saved by her wonted art once more?').

65 Contrary to Ap. Rhod. 4.1053–7, the Argonauts do not show any form of solidarity with Medea.

66 Having been a distinctive feature of Medea, *pudor* now becomes a prerogative of Jason (who had explicitly rejected it before: see 5.324, quoted on p. 123 above).

expressed by the 'stern counsels of his men' (*decreta suorum dura*, 464–5), on the other. At first, Jason is tempted by the idea of engaging in a war, where Medea would share his own risks or rather be his powerful ally (*cunctatur Martemque cupit sociamque pericli | cogitat*, 'he tarries and would fain fight, and bethinks him of her who shares his peril', 8.403–4), but he is also aware that his comrades' wishes are to be taken into account (*haud ultra sociis obsistere pergit*, 'no further does he resist his companions', 404). A few lines before the abrupt end of the text, Jason is still facing the same dilemma. This time, however, it is Medea herself who, after reproaching Jason for not recalling her own merits,⁶⁷ declares she is ready to fight under his orders (*quin nunc quoque quaero |* (460) *quid iubeas*, 'nay, now too I ask what thou commandest', 8.440–60). At this point, Jason will have probably changed his mind, if not for love, at least for fear of Medea's 'anger' (463^A *nota Colchidos ira*).⁶⁸

In fact, we really cannot guess what will follow. To resolve the narrative impasse, the intervention of Juno is needed, whom we have seen at work throughout the whole text, as the internal master of the plot. The tempest she raises manages temporarily to prevent war from breaking out, but now everybody—the poet included, it seems—is waiting for a possible solution from the great goddess (*expediant donec Iunonia sese | consilia atque aliquem bello ferat anxia finem*, 'till Juno's schemes work themselves out and her anxious care set some ending to the war', 8.383–4).

Conclusion

War is a characterising theme of Valerius' *Argonautica*, where—contrary to what happens in Apollonius—it often becomes narrative reality, to the point that it provides the argument of a whole book (6). Nevertheless, the heroic-epic parenthesis cannot decisively affect the standard plot and, generally speaking, is to be considered no more than a factor of delay. After fighting for Aeetes against Perses, Jason will play a more traditional role: as happens in

67 *credidit ardentis quis te tunc iungere tauros | posse, quis ad saevi venturum templa draconis?* ('who believed then that thou couldst yoke the fiery bulls, or couldst venture to the precinct of the fierce serpent?', 8.437–8).

68 *nota* is a correction (M²) on the reading of L (*noto*). If it is right, we have to presuppose a 'proleptic' nuance, or rather think of an (all but innocent) usage of *ira* as an equivalent of 'violent force' (*OLD* s.v. *ira* 3), just like that displayed by Medea in Colchis. In any case, it seems better than the banalising *mota* proposed by Ehlers.

the Hellenistic model, he has to deal with the trials imposed by the tyrant and needs Medea's help to obtain the Golden Fleece.

However, albeit indirectly, the war in Colchis has a precise narrative function, as it provides the scenario for the heroine's falling in love with Jason. In the middle of Book 6, Juno's 'authorial intervention' marks a radical change of perspective, leaving room for Medea's entrance into the action. Once she has reached the city walls, the Colchian princess looks at the spectacle of war as a privileged witness: the way she gradually focuses upon Jason influences the battle narrative, which becomes more selective than it was in the first half of the book. At the same time, the *teichoskopy* as a literary device serves to attract Medea herself to the heroic universe, where she plays a passive as well as an active role. Love arises within a context completely permeated by the traditional set of epic values (power, royalty, social prestige) and categories (divine apparatus, heroic *aristeiai* etc.).⁶⁹ These circumstances oblige us to problematise the onslaught of erotic passion and its impact. Medea's falling in love still keeps its crucial importance as the narrative turning point, but its aetiology is traced back to an act of divine power, whose archaic character—stressed by the personal interventions (in Homeric manner) of two major goddesses—contrasts with the sophisticated brightness of the divine scene which opens Apollonius' Book 3.

The 'military alliance' between Juno and Venus looks even more solid than in Book 4 of the *Aeneid*, because neither of them aims at taking sides for the heroine. Medea's virginal *pudor* tenaciously contrasts with divine power and is the protagonist of a true moral *aristeia*.⁷⁰ Finally, however, Aeetes' daughter abandons the 'passive' role and becomes Jason's active ally. The Flavian Medea does not limit her contribution to the delivery of magic weapons, but participates directly in the struggle against Aeetes' monsters. This process of epic transcodification changes the way Medea is perceived: the young delicate girl becomes a true 'war weapon' and, during the flight (Book 8), the myth of her universal power starts to develop.⁷¹

69 It is not accidental that in Valerius' epic we are given a clue to the political consequences, respectively, of Medea's flight (Perses' provisional victory) and of her coming back (Aeetes' return to the throne).

70 Valerius' Medea resists transformation into an elegiac heroine to the point that she becomes the (proto-tragic) victim of passion: in this sense, while trying to preserve her own epic stature, she looks like a girl provided with strict (Roman?) education.

71 At Peuce, before being swallowed up by waves, Styrius thinks of his former fiancée as raising the tempest against the Colchian ships, and Jason himself is tempted to engage in battle relying upon her magical faculties.

For his part, in Colchis Jason shows a good deal of self-confidence in managing his diplomatic skills when he succeeds in turning the awkward alliance with Aeetes into an opportunity. Having been the victim of the treacherous tyrant, who asked him for help in war (an unforeseen kind of *labor*), the hero does not fail to take advantage of the delicate situation and achieves the goal of his enterprise (the Golden Fleece). In fact, he comes back with another (even more precious) 'prize': the mighty ally who made it possible and upon whom—as announced by Jupiter—the future of Aeetes' kingdom will depend.⁷² In view of the epic-historical character of Valerius' Colchian episode, we could even compare Jason's political (viz. 'imperial') attitude with that displayed by Rome when intervening in the numerous wars of succession which characterise the eastern client kingdoms of Rome, like Armenia, during the first century CE.⁷³

To sum up, in this Flavian *Argonautica* 'war' and 'love' have to undergo programmatic redefinition as literary themes and adapt their respective epic roles as well. Moreover, they no longer seem to be reciprocally exclusive, as happens in the Hellenistic model; rather, they seek new forms of compatibility within the narrative plot.

War undoubtedly deserves to be considered a distinctive ingredient of Valerius' poem, a tribute to the tradition of the literary genre, a clue to the 'foundational ambitions' of this epigonic poem. However, it has a significantly more important function as background to Medea's falling in love than as a context of heroic performances.

Similarly, if love still represents (formally at least) the decisive factor which leads to Jason's conquest of the Golden Fleece, we must take into account the strong manipulation of Medea's will by Juno and Venus, as well as her *pudor*'s vain effort to resist passion: both these circumstances dramatically affect the character of love in Valerius' *Argonautica* and prefigure the tragic evolution of Medea's destiny.

72 Medea's great value as 'prize' is astutely emphasised by Jason (8.37–40, esp. 38–9: *solaque tantarum virgo haud indigna viarum | causa reperta mihi*, 'O maiden who alone hast proved reason well worthy of such a voyage').

73 Rome tried to play a key role of diplomatic mediation and political–military influence in the Far East. Think, for example, of Tiridates I, the founder of the Armenian line of the Arsacid dynasty, who was crowned king of Armenia by Nero in 66 CE.

Philosophical Ideas in Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica*

Attila Ferenczi

[Homerus] *quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non* | *planius ac melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit*—‘[Homer] tells us what is fair, what is foul, what is helpful, what is not, more plainly and better than Chrysippus or Crantor’¹—says the speaker of the second *Epistle* of Horace (*Ep.* 1.2.3–4). Accordingly, he encourages his reader and friend to turn to the Homeric poems with his questions originally addressed to the philosophers. As a poet he suggests that one can learn about matters of ethics ‘better’ (*melius*) and more ‘plainly’ (*planius*; with another reading: *plenius*: ‘more fully expressed’) from a poetic work than from philosophy. The recipient should seek answers to the abstract questions of philosophy by reading poetic texts. This is the way of reading that Horace recommends, and probably it was not a very striking or novel one for his addressee.² Nothing illustrates better how common this approach was in antiquity and how far this technique of reading could go than the various Hellenistic interpretations of the Homeric texts which the modern age has summed up under the title of ‘allegorical readings’. With this approach the *Iliad* was read as a quasi- or proto-philosophical work, with the gods being used as cover names for moral or physical truths. Servius’ commentary on Virgil’s *Aeneid* proves that this intimate connection between the different but related cultural forms of epic poetry and philosophical treatises was regarded by the commentators as self-evident up until the end of antiquity.³ On the other hand, this expectation on the part of the recipient community must have had consequences for the attitude of the authors, too. We can assume that the representation in an epic

1 Translation by Fairclough (1926).

2 Horace’s position may be motivated by the general aversion of the Roman aristocracy to Greek philosophy. Cf. Mayer (2005) 146–59. On the relationship between poetry, notably that of Homer, and philosophy, with which Horace begins, see Hunter (2014).

3 On 10.467: *sectis philosophorum poetae pro qualitate negotiorum semper utuntur* (‘The poets have always used the different schools of philosophers according to the requirements of the plot’). For further relevant testimonies, see Hardie (1986) 4–5.

poem of elements of philosophical origin was a common practice for a Roman poet. Quintilian points out that an author must have some acquaintance with the teachings of philosophy, since philosophy constitutes a traditional part of a literary work too (*Inst.* 1.4.4).

The origin of the world, the way in which it functions and the *telos* ('aim') of its changes, as well as the place of individuals in that world, their relation to each other, and the question of death, can be the subject equally of epic poetry as of a philosophical work. If we follow Cicero (*Ac.* 2.29) and define philosophy simply as a way of thinking (and writing) that aims at distinguishing truth from falsity and right from wrong, it is clear that any part of an epic poem can be read as having a direct or indirect connection with philosophy. Thus an interpretation focusing on the philosophical ideas in an epic poem is always a result of selection and depends on the interpretation of the text. There are, nevertheless, great differences in regard to how indispensable philosophy is for the understanding of any specific passage: some parts of an epic narration lend themselves to a set of cumulative philosophical associations. The epic narrator or one of the characters can use the language of philosophy to reveal an invisible order behind the story. These explanations usually form a more or less closed and separate unit in the flow of narration. One of the best-known examples is Anchises' explanation to Aeneas in the Underworld about the metempsychotic nature of souls to be born to the upper world (*Aen.* 6.724–51).

Another notable passage is found in Lucan's epic, with some special importance for the interpretation of the *Argonautica*. At the beginning of Book 2 of the *Bellum Civile* (2.4–15) the narrator interrupts the narrative with a question about the interpretability of the story he has been narrating: how should we understand the appearance of sinister portents preceding Caesar's arrival at Rome? Is this a mere coincidence, since the world does not work according to a predetermined order, or, on the contrary, do the omens prove the ordered system of the world? The former argument might have reminded the reader of the popular Epicurean doctrine and the latter of Stoic teaching. A similar passage of direct philosophical tenor is found in Book 3 of the *Argonautica*, when Mopsus explains the causes of the lethargy that overwhelmed the Argonauts after they killed their hosts in Cyzicus (3.377–417): human beings, though enjoying but a short life, are nevertheless kin of the heavenly fire of Olympus, so it is a serious crime to drive out with the sword a human soul that would yet tarry. If this happens, the souls will return from the throne of the infernal Jupiter and inflict penalties on the guilty souls of those who harmed them.⁴

4 Cf. Manuwald (1999) 106–29.

These examples are, however, rather exceptional: the reader more often comes across passages integrated into the narrative that may recall a philosophical context, but where this is not inevitably the only reading. To take one instance: in the invocation at the beginning of the work the poet asks the *princeps* for support and inspiration, *eripe me populis et habenti nubila terrae* ('raise me above the nations and the cloud-wrapped earth', 1.10).⁵ The contrast between the lower sphere, where clear sight is impeded by clouds, and an elevated position offering a far-reaching panorama can be interpreted as a traditional metaphor of poetic insight. We find it in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (228–34) in a strikingly similar form, where not only are up and down opposed, but they are also complemented by the opposition of humid vs dry air. Nevertheless, given the prominence of Stoic ideas elsewhere in the *Argonautica*, admitting the possibility of allusion to the Stoic principle that the 'dry' soul was the most insightful because of the fiery origin of the soul seems to enrich the interpretation, importing a cosmological doctrine into the understanding of a picture.⁶ But in either case—that is, in the quasi-philosophical passages of commentary introduced into the narrative and in the possible philosophical allusions that can be detected throughout—the connection between the poetic text and philosophical doctrine is of an intertextual character: the text evokes the experience of other texts, and it is this that makes the ideas identifiable with different doctrines of specific philosophical schools.

Because of these considerations, the present chapter does not seek to create a list of ideas open to philosophical interpretation, or to sum up the efforts of previous scholarly treatises, but rather to characterise the poetic function of the philosophical content in the *Argonautica* through one complex problem: the tension between determinism (often represented by the term *fata*, speaking of fated events) and human agency (with the concomitant notion of personal responsibility).⁷ The concept of fate is traditionally regarded as a representative meeting point of the two literary forms—and representative in two senses: it is a basic constituent of the logical construction and a characteristic of the poetic procedure at the same time. I will analyse the representation of the problem mainly in two scenes that report conversations between the gods.

5 Translations of Valerius' *Argonautica* are adapted from Mozley (1934).

6 Cf. Zissos (2008) *ad loc.*, who refers to Stoic fragments: fr. 5, 49, 69, 118 Diels-Kranz.

7 There are only a few attempts to offer a coherent overview of this question: still important are Billerbeck (1986) and Lefèvre (1998). For the most detailed and best-argued overview of Stoic ideas in *Argonautica*, see Zissos (2013). I would like to express my gratitude here to Andrew Zissos for having allowed me to consult his excellent study in manuscript form.

spes et metus

In Book 1 of the *Argonautica* Sol seeks to learn the future from Jupiter in a council of the gods, since he foresees the dangers that the voyage of the Argo presents to his son Aeetes. His lament gives the king of the gods an opportunity to place the events in a broader historical framework in front of his fellow gods and reveal the course of fate. In the introductory passage the narrator—in an unusual narrative device—anticipates the thoughts and motivation of the highest god:

sidereae tunc arce pater pulcherrima Graium
coepta tuens tantamque operis consurgere molem
laetatur; patrii neque enim probat otia regni.

Then the father from his starry citadel beholding these glorious deeds of the Greeks and how the mighty work went forward, is glad; for he cares not for the ease of his sire's rule.

(1.498–500)

The voyage of the Argo takes place on the boundary of two different mythical eras, the earlier ruled by Saturn and the later by Jupiter; the undertaking of the Argonauts is one of the first great feats of the second. Here Valerius taps into an extremely rich tradition. There already existed in Rome fundamentally differing discourses about the Argo's significance. The introduction of sailing, in other words the conquest of the maritime domain, originally not a familiar home for terrestrial creatures like humans, could be seen as a manifestation of *hybris*, a vice that commonly entailed a series of miseries for mankind, whereas in other interpretations the voyage of the Argo was deemed an overture to the great achievements that brought glory to mankind. Horace's *Carmen* 1.3 and the famous chorus of Seneca's *Medea* are the best representatives of the former discourse.⁸ The very name of the earlier era speaks for itself: *aurea aetas*—the Golden Age.⁹ The name defines the peace and tranquillity of the Saturnian era as the best period of history, to be followed only by inferior ones; yet if the highest divinity specified, by contrast, that struggle and achievement were the way to virtue, the verdict implied in the metaphor cannot be justified. In the context of Flavian Rome it seems evident that the opposition correlates with the Epicurean ideal of *ataraxia* on the one hand and the Stoic *bios*

8 A copious collection of related passages appears in Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) on 1.3.17.

9 Valerius never actually uses this term.

praktikos on the other (although, as we shall see, the implied notions actually go back much further). The lines quoted above seem to indicate that the principal theme in the *Argonautica* is the Stoic praise of an active life. Yet Valerius voices the other concept as well, when Jason addresses Neptune in a prayer at the moment of launching the Argo: *scio me cunctis e gentibus unum | inlicitas temptare vias hiememque mereri* ('I know that I alone of all mankind am venturing on unlawful paths and do deserve tempest', 1.196–7).

Work and *aretē* ('virtue') were already linked in Hesiod (*Op.* 289–90), and he speaks of the anger of both gods and men against those who live idly like the stingless drones (*Op.* 303–4). Strabo (15.1.64) tells the story of Onesicritus, who was sent by Alexander to interview the Brahmins, and claimed to have heard from one of them that Zeus, hating the abundance of a Golden Age state of things, destroyed everything and introduced for man a life of toil.¹⁰ The notions of *labor* and ascension combine most famously in the Stoic interpretation of the myth of Hercules, a veritable gospel of the struggle for virtue. Closer to Valerius' time, both Epictetus and Seneca illustrate the necessity of exertion and struggle by the allegory of the athlete: God trains the elect person through vicissitudes to make him fit for the hard work that is awaiting him.¹¹ The opposition between 'activity' and 'idleness' is a recurrent motif throughout the *Argonautica*. In Book 2 Hercules blames his fellow Argonauts and especially Jason for staying too long with the Lemnian women. He contrasts his idle (*resides*, 2.373) comrades with his own desire for action (*rerum amor*, 2.381). In an ironic way, the same reason is given for leaving Hercules behind while he is searching in vain for Hylas: *quid deside terra | haeremus?* ('Why linger we in a slothful land?', 3.660–1). In Book 3 the narrator remarks on the mental status of the Argonauts after the battle fought in error with the Cyzicans: *patria ex oculis acerque laborum | pulsus amor segnisque iuvat frigescere luctu* ('lost to view is the home-land, forgotten the keen love of enterprise, and their joy is to grow old in the languor of distress', 3.367–8). But the ideal of activity and endeavour remains abstract throughout the work and is rather a choice of values than a target-oriented operation. The Argonauts' goal is to accomplish great deeds in

10 For further parallels, see Wilkinson (1963) 75–8.

11 The closest parallel to the Valerian passage is, beyond doubt, to be found in Virgil's *Georgics*: *pater ipse colendi | haud facile esse viam voluit, primusque per artem | movit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda | nec torpere gravi passus sua regna veterno* ('The great Father himself has willed that the path of husbandry should not run smooth, who first made art awake the fields, sharpening men's wits by care, nor letting his kingdom slumber in heavy lethargy', Virg. *G.* 1.121–4; tr. Fairclough/Goold). Cf. Schubert (1984) 22–5; Feeney (1991): 318–19.

general, and the Golden Fleece has no intrinsic importance, for Jason knows from the moment of undertaking the expedition that the Fleece is just a pretence for Pelias to send him away (1.83–5): it might be a token of success, but the possession of the object itself changes nothing. Herein lies a fundamental difference between the *Aeneid* and the *Argonautica*.

Nothing can illustrate better that we are dealing with a poetic system of heterogeneous components than the inconsistency between the quoted introductory words of the narrator and the speech of Jupiter himself. The answer of the supreme god to Sol's complaint expounds another cosmology:¹²

tum genitor 'vetera haec nobis et condita pergunt
ordine cuncta suo rerumque a principe cursu
fixa manent; neque enim terris tum sanguis in ullis
noster erat cum fata darem, iustique facultas
hinc mihi cum varios struerem per saecula reges.'

Then spoke the Father: 'All these things have been established by us from of old and now move forward each in its appointed order and remain unalterable from the beginning of things; for there was no stock of ours in any land when I laid down the laws of destiny; wherefore I had the power to deal justly when I was founding a line of kings to last throughout the ages.'

(1.531–5)

Note that there is no mention of Saturn or any other god ruling or even existing before Jupiter. The explanation has a clearly identifiable Stoic character. It was Jupiter who created the *fata* in the absence of other gods, so there was no need to respect other interests and thus he could be objective (*iusti facultas mihi*).¹³ The fulfilment of *fatum* begins with the journey of the Argo. So far the Pontus region has been flourishing and enjoying abundance, power and peace. But others will come; Jupiter will support the Greeks next, but neither will they be able to maintain their supremacy for long, as others again will follow:

12 On Jupiter's prophecy, see Adamietz (1976) 21–4; Schubert (1984) 22–44; Wacht (1992) *passim*; Lefèvre (1998) 223–2; Manuwald (1999) 138–53.

13 See the famous and often quoted passage from Seneca's *De Providentia* (5.8): 'an irrevocable course of events carries along human and divine actions equally: the founder and controller of all things himself wrote down what is fated, but he follows it; he always obeys it, he ordained it only once'. Cf. Billerbeck (1986) 3130.

gentesque fovebo | mox alias ('I will shortly take other nations into my care', 1.555–6). The most important model is undoubtedly the Jupiter–Venus scene in *Aeneid* 1. There Jupiter tries to reassure an anxious goddess and parent, thereby providing himself with the opportunity to unfold the order of fate fixed long before. Valerius' *atque ego curarum repetam decreta mearum* ('so then I will unfold the decrees that I made in my providence', 1.536) has its parallel in *longius et volvens fatorum arcana movebo* ('further unrolling the scroll of fate I will disclose its secrets', Virg. *Aen.* 1.262).¹⁴ Venus turns to Jupiter and asks: 'Father, what thought has changed your mind?' (1.237). And Jupiter assures his daughter that fate is to be fulfilled in the originally intended form, without formulating a theoretical response to her implicit question as to whether fate can be altered, or if it must stay fixed and unchangeable, in any case, forever. The king of the gods declares the same in Valerius. The essential difference between the two speeches is that Virgil's Jupiter emphasises the fixedness of fate and that he will keep his word, while meanwhile he is revealing details of the nearer and more distant future: the foundation of Rome, the birth of Caesar etc.;¹⁵ Jupiter's prophecy in the *Argonautica*, on the other hand, is limited to the announcement of changes to come, without giving any details—nor does it refer to any qualitative improvement of the successive eras. The power is here a simple result of changing strength and bravery, so what we have is rather an expression of the idea of *translatio imperii* than an allusion to the beneficial Stoic Providence.¹⁶

Then Jupiter's speech suddenly takes another direction: instead of outlining a fixed and final system of fate, as Jupiter emphasised at the beginning of his prophecy, he speaks about an open system:

... pateant montes silvaeque lacusque
 cunctaque claustra maris, spes et metus omnibus esto.
 arbiter ipse locos terrenaque summa movendo
 experiar, quaenam populis longissima cunctis
 regna velim linquamque datas ubi certus habenas.

14 Translation by Fairclough/Goold (1999). The closest model for the sentence in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* has the usual epic *ast* connective: *ast ego curarum vobis arcana mearum | expromam* (8.279–80) Cf. Zissos (2008) *ad loc.*

15 This does not mean that the Virgilian representation of fate is going to be free of contradictions. With Virgil the conflicting powers are not within the prophecy but between Jupiter's prophecy and the historic experiences of the recipient.

16 Lefèvre (1998) 230–2.

... Let mountains, forests, lakes and all the barriers of the ocean open out before them; hope and fear shall decide the day for all alike. I myself by shifting the seat of empire upon earth shall make trial which kingdom I shall elect to let rule longest over all peoples, and in whose hands I can without fear leave the reins of power once bestowed.

(1.556–60)

The opening perspective of a human horizon and the worldwide arena for human efforts can be connected with the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis*, progress of an individual by which the locally finite person becomes, with the help of wisdom, a citizen of the *kosmopolis*.¹⁷ But what is Jupiter to be *arbiter* of? If everything is arranged by a predetermined order and the events of earthly life follow a divine plan, what will Jupiter 'make trial' of and what kind of decision is he to make? Is it still a question of which people shall enjoy a long supremacy and which the final one? Are changes still admissible in this? We are confronting here something radically different from the model presented in the *Aeneid*. In the speech of Valerius' Jupiter the overall determinism stands in conflict with the personal responsibility of the individual. The speech ends with an exhortation to his sons: *tendite in astra, viri: ... durum vobis iter et grave caeli | institui* ('Strain forward to the stars, my heroes: ... painful and wearisome for you have I made the path to heaven', 1.563, 565–6).

How can the ethos of activity discussed above be made to harmonise with the dogma of determinism in the Valerian story—a closed system that is represented there as open? Both are existing ideas in the epic tradition, but their joint application is by no means obvious. Uncertainty and decisions unmade are completely incompatible with the concept of fate in the Jupiter–Venus scene of the *Aeneid*. The essence of the context of the dialogue is that Jupiter wants to soothe his anxious daughter, and to do so he stresses that everything follows a previously set plan, and nothing can alter this. He presents certain details of history that belong to the far future as a proof of this fixed and unchangeable order. The Jupiter of the *Aeneid* does not allow himself the role of an *arbiter* and does not reveal the future as an open system. Statius, however, chooses the opposite possibility and does not refer to a closed construction with pre-ordained fate fixed from the creation of the world. Jupiter's word becomes fate as soon as it is uttered: *vocem fata sequuntur* (1.213).¹⁸ This is a concept of a

17 The most enthusiastic cosmopolitan credo in Book 7 is Juno's exhortation to Medea to leave her country with Jason (7.227–30).

18 Cf. further: *non hoc statui sub tempore rebus | occasum Aoniis* ('I have not decided upon ruin for the Aonians at this time')—says the Jupiter of the *Thebaid* (*Theb.* 7.219–20).

permanently nascent fate which is not independent of the actions of individuals: on the contrary, Jupiter's words suggest that the ethical conditions of the human sphere can define their future, and his role as *arbiter* is merely to judge their achievements. The simultaneous representation of two different systems (the closed Virgilian one and the open one in Statius) produces an ideological tension that lies at the very foundation of the story of the *Argonautica*.

The heterogeneous character of the references can (and must) be interpreted as a result of the extremely rich epic tradition behind Valerian poetry. This approach would, nevertheless, lead us to further intertextual analysis of the text; I will try to show instead, staying closer to the topic of philosophical ideas, that the different ideas reflected in the *Argonautica* can be seen as a consequence of the vulgarised ideas of contemporary philosophical disputes. In fact, the contradiction between predetermined fate and personal moral responsibility was by no means unfamiliar to the Roman reader, and was one of the most often repeated objections levelled by the critics of Stoicism. The notorious 'idle argument' (*argos logos*) illustrated the alleged consequences of determinism. 'If it is fated for you to recover from this illness, you will recover whether you call in a doctor or do not; similarly, if it is fated for you not to recover from this illness, you will not recover whether you call in a doctor or do not; and either your recovery or your non-recovery is fated; therefore there is no point in calling in a doctor.' This mode of arguing is rightly called "idle" and indolent, because the same train of reasoning will lead to the entire abolition of action from life' (Cic. *Fat.* 28–9).¹⁹ Stoic philosophy developed different answers to the problem to avoid an extreme determinism as a consequence of the closed causal structure.²⁰ However, Valerius clearly does not follow the Stoics rigorously: what he does is represent simultaneously a predetermined closed system together with the open horizon offered to human exertions. While the text in Valerius' poem recalls the intellectual problem treated in philosophical literature, Cicero's philosophical text in turn quotes and interprets what had already been given form in poetry. *De Fato* illustrates well that the myth of the Argo had been connected previously with the problem of causation, which makes clear that Valerius inherited this question together with the mythical subject. Some paragraphs after the introduction of the 'idle argument' Cicero cites the famous opening of *Medea Exul* by Ennius:

19 Translation by Sutton and Fairclough (1942).

20 Cicero (*Fat.* 30) reports that Chrysippus used the distinction between simple and conjoined (*cofatalia*) occurrences in order to refute the 'idle argument.' See on this Bobzien (1998) 217–33.

utinam ne in nemore Pelio securibus
caesae accidissent abiegnae ad terram trabes!

Would that in Pelion's glade the pine-tree beams
had never fallen to earth by axes hewn!

(Cic. *Fat.* 35)

The question the passage raises is: how can the starting point of the causal connections be defined? Would it be the case that, had a ship not been made of the trees of Pelion, or Mount Pelion never existed, Medea would never have left her homeland Colchis? Cicero's response is a clear negation of the chain of connections: the voyage of the *Argo* cannot alone be held to blame for Medea's love. The *Argo* as an *origo* of the logical sequence is coded in the literary tradition, and so is the question raised in the council of the gods of the *Argonautica*.

Valerius' Jupiter either does not want to or cannot say more to his fellow gods.²¹ Stoic teaching was rich in different explanations of fated causation, but Valerius apparently does not make any effort to harmonise the contradicting tendencies of his metaphysical claims. The system is closed and open at the same time, and this tension will not be solved for the time being. The king of the gods assumes the right not to give further explanations about the details of the future and above all about the final stages of earthly history. He keeps his twin audiences, the other gods and the reader of the epic poem, in ignorance. With the words *spes et metus omnibus esto* ('hope and fear shall decide the day for all alike') he concludes his prophecy. The rhetorical form and the narrative context recall Lucan's deliberations on the metaphysics of the world from Book 2 of his epic:²²

sit subitum, quodcumque paras, sit caeca futuri
mens hominum fati, liceat sperare timenti.

Let thy purpose, whatever it be, be sudden; let the mind of man be blind
to coming doom; he fears, but leave him hope.

(Lucan 2.14–15)

In Lucan two possibilities are explicitly raised: either there is a predestined order of the world (as the Stoics say), or nothing is fixed and so everything happens in a random way (as the Epicureans claim). Valerius alludes more

²¹ Cf. Manuwald (2009) 597–8.

²² Stover ((2012) 41) registers the allusion but he emphasises the differences.

obliquely to two possibilities: either everything is destined, or there is an open scope for human agency. In the end, neither of them settles the intellectual embarrassment, they simply point to the absence of certainty. The proper reaction of mortal man to this ignorance is the combination of *spes* and *timor*. Both are well-known and important components in the Stoic system of emotions. Cicero is again worth quoting: 'And if self-confidence, that is, steadfast reliance of the soul is a kind of knowledge and firm belief where assent is not rashly given, want of self-confidence is also fear (*metus*) of an expected and threatening evil; and if hope (*spes*) is expectation of good, fear must be expectation of evil. Just then as it is with fear, so with the remaining disorders; their element is evil' (*Tusc.* 4.80).²³ So it is a classical Stoic combination of *spes* and *metus* with the vagueness of knowledge reflected in this passage that we see in the *Argonautica*. Jupiter's exhortation does not portray Jason as a hero of Stoic ethical progress or his *virtus* in Stoic terms.²⁴

habent quoniam sua fata furores

Valerius uses the characters' ignorance of the future to manage the contradiction between determinism and competition in Book 1. As the paired prophecies of Mopsus and Idmon (1.205–39) or the story of Phineus (4.474–84), the most important prophetic figure of the work, demonstrate, the foretelling of the future is by no means impossible in the world of the *Argonautica*. Even more detailed than their predictions is the prophetic ekphrasis of the temple of Sol in Colchis (5.409–51).²⁵ There the most important events of Jason's personal life are displayed in a cosmic frame, from the construction of the Argo to the burning of the palace of Corinth. But Phineus is punished by Jupiter for having divulged the *fata* and the god's secret plans out of pity for humans, and the divine creator of the work of art represents figures and scenes on the temple that the beholder cannot understand as a projection of the future (5.551–2).²⁶ Jason's ignorance is a repeated motif of the plot, and its motivating role seems even more emphasised than in other epic poems.²⁷ This condition

23 Translation by King (1927).

24 For Jason as not an exemplary hero, see Lefèvre (2012) 201–2.

25 On this, see Heerink in this volume, pp. 86–94.

26 The obvious model is *Aeneid* 8: Aeneas shoulders the shield made by Vulcan without understanding the pictures on it pointing to the future of Rome: *ignarus imagine gaudet* ('he rejoices even if not understanding', 8.730).

27 For a general introduction to the question, see Hershkowitz (1998b) 242–64.

sets the problem of knowledge in the foreground of the work. By the Flavian era, as a result of the on-going debate between the representatives of the Stoic and the Academic schools, the epistemological question was a common central feature of philosophical thinking.

Jason exhorts his men when the crew comes under attack in the harbour of Cyzicus: *virī, optatos huc adfore credite Colchos* ('and you, my men, deem that the Colchians we have longed for are upon us!', 3.82). The imperative verb *credite* is meant to bridge the rift between the ignorance of the Argonauts and the certainty needed for fighting: 'you shall fight in the sense that it is already Colchis, or as if it were Colchis'. Jason's encouragement is, however, mistakenly directed, and the Argonauts kill their hosts thinking they are foes. A rather complex issue is their passage between the moving and clashing Cyanaean rocks (4.637–710). Phineus' prophecy portrayed this trial as the major difficulty in the remaining part of the journey. Pallas wants to help the Argo and sends them a sign by flashing the Aegis, but Jason is not certain of the meaning: '*sequor, o quicumque deorum*' | *Aesonides 'vel fallis'*, "I follow", cried the son of Aeson, "whatever god thou be—aye even if thou deceivest!", 4.674–5). Having passed the rocks, Jason feels deeply anxious about the way home: '*unde per hos iterum montes fuga?*' *talīa fundit* | *imperio fixos Iovis aeternumque revinctos* | *nescius* ("How can we sail a second time between these mountains?" Such words he utters not knowing that they [i.e. the rocks] are fixed and eternally bound by Jove's command', 4.707–9). This was one of the most important reasons for Friedrich Mehmel, the first modern to dedicate a monograph to the work, to characterise the poem as a story of senselessness (*Sinnlosigkeit*).²⁸

Lack of knowledge can be the cause of an action but also of the omission of an action. A case of the latter occurs at the very beginning of Book 2, where the narrator lets us know that Juno did not allow Jason to know what had happened to his family, for otherwise he would have turned the ship back and returned home to take vengeance on Pelias (2.1–5). This situation recalls the beginning of *Aeneid* 5: the hero is sailing away from Carthage and is not aware of the events that have taken place there. Aeneas did not know the cause of the far-lighting fire of the funeral pyre of Dido because he had already set sail. The narrator emphasises Aeneas' ignorance without connecting it to any divine mediation—after all, this was a normal consequence of being on the open sea. So the simple economy of storytelling does not require the involvement of any divine power to explain that Jason on the open sea is not aware of something that happened to his family on the land: by mentioning the figure

28 Mehmel (1934) 95.

The irrational resolution finds, consequently, its explanation in Pallas' wish to fight: if the Argonauts intervene on the side of Perses, whose party is the more powerful anyway, Pallas would be robbed of the possibility of participating in a war, and the reader of reading a lengthy war narrative (*proelia tibi grata*). So they send the hero to support King Aeetes; moreover, the conversation creates an immediate connection between the role of the Argonauts in this war and Medea's help (*alia orsa movebo*). In Apollonius of Rhodes' version of the story there is no other option for the Greeks to gain possession of the Fleece than to rely on Medea's help, but the introduction of the war in the Roman epic constitutes a basically different set of circumstances. At the beginning of Book 6 Perses makes an attempt to enlighten the Greek hero about his mistakenly assumed role in the war: *quinam hinc animos averterit error?* ('What delusion can have blinded them thereto?', 6.17). But Mars intervenes, driven by his passion for war (*ardet furiis*, 6.1), and with suddenly arising sounds of battle he gives both sides to believe that they are under attack by the enemy—and so the slaughter begins before Perses' messengers can reach the Argonauts.³² Like the rhetorical device of *praeteritio*, the representation of a failed attempt to do something produces a special situation—it can bring into play a deed which actually did not happen and so raises the question: what if it had not been unsuccessful, what end would the story have had if the messengers could have reached Jason? The small episode emphasises that the hero is not in the position to decide, simply because he is not aware that the situation allows him an option: it is the goddesses who make the decision for him. The hero's knowledge, i.e. the epistemological element, and the question of freedom are strictly connected in this divine intervention. The support of the gods assures the success of the expedition but it means, equally, that they will use Jason merely as a piece in the game.³³

At the end of Book 5, before the outbreak of war, there is another council of the gods: now Mars turns to Pallas with passionate reproaches for the probable loss of the Golden Fleece; Pallas, in turn, calls her stepbrother a bloodthirsty monster and appeals to Jupiter for help. The king of the gods warns both of them to behave and describes to them the future fate of Colchis. He concludes the speech with the following words:

quolibet ista modo, quacumque impellite pugna
quae coepisti, habeant quoniam sua fata furores.

32 For Mars' intervention, see Fucecchi (2004) 115–26.

33 Cf. Bobzien (1998) 131–6.

Further your enterprises by what means you will, by any war for madness
hath its own doom.

(5.675–6)

The *furor* here refers in the first instance to the passions of Pallas, Juno and Mars, but in turn they cause human actions and so the final objectivisation of the emotional drive is Medea's erotic passion, the autocratic egoism of Aeetes, and the senseless war against Perses. The *furor* is divine and the action human. Jupiter declares that whatever the gods do, i.e. whatever they make the mortals do, becomes part of fate. Individual selfishness and infatuation become, when seen from a distance, a constituent of a larger divine plan. Pious and impious deeds alike serve the fulfilment of fate, and the part finds its final place in the whole. This fundamental Stoic idea about Jupiter recalls the famous *Hymn to Zeus* by Cleanthes:³⁴

But you know how to make the uneven even
and to put into order the disorderly; even the unloved is dear to you

(καὶ κοσμεῖν τᾶκοσμα, καὶ οὐ φίλα σοὶ φίλα ἐστίν).

For you have thus joined everything into one, the good with the bad,
that there comes to be one ever-existing rational order for everything.

(SVF I 537.18–21)³⁵

The same idea recurs in Epictetus:

He [Zeus] ordained that there be summer and winter, abundance and dearth, virtue and vice, and all such opposites for the harmony of the whole.

(*Dial.* 1.12.16)³⁶

The abstract Stoic ideal of fate, Jove and nature is combined in the *Argonautica* with the traditional epic mythological material. For Cleanthes and the Stoics the all-disposing role of a reasonable Jupiter left no space for the actions of other divinities. The divine scene at the end of Book 5 of the *Argonautica* integrates the quasi-monotheistic Stoic supreme god into the traditional polytheistic epic world. The relation between the disordered passions of the individual and the harmonising power of the god of nature, i.e. the partial and

34 Cf. Long (1974) 181–2.

35 Translation by Thom (2005).

36 Translation by Dobbin (1998).

the total, is normally meant in the philosophical discourses as an opposition between the human and divine, but now Valerius represents both sides of this opposition within the divine world. The construction can, of course, be related to the *Aeneid*. The council of gods at the beginning of Book 10 is the direct model and is similar in many respects. In Valerius, however, the system becomes much more polarised. The repeated ignorance of the human actors, the violent intervention of the gods and their ever-present passions determine the roles and events of the war between Perses and the Argonauts, and this poses the question of the position of the mortal in that construction in very pointed form: if everything that happens constitutes an element in the course of fate, then nothing can happen which was not previously fated, and so how can the responsibility of the individual be defined in this system? By the time of Valerius this was a commonly treated problem in Stoic ethics, and it became a part of popular moralisation of a Stoic tenor. 'If all things take place by fate, all things take place with an antecedent cause; and if desire is caused, those things which follow desire are also caused; therefore assent is also caused. But if the cause of desire is not situated within us, even desire itself is also not in our power; and if this is so, those things which are caused by desire also do not rest with us. It follows therefore that neither assent nor action is in our power. From this it results that there is no justice in either praise or blame, either honours or punishments' (Cic. *Fat.* 40). The problem of freedom, determinism and moral responsibility appeared several times in the literature of the era (and here I am quoting just the best-known instances). In *Ep.* 107 Seneca translates (following Cicero) Cleanthes' prayer to Zeus (*SVF* I 527), but he makes the four-line poem one verse longer: *ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt* ('fate leads the willing and drags the unwilling', 107.11). In Book 2 of the *Bellum Civile* Cato, a figure renowned for Stoic virtue, says of his participation in the civil war: *summus, Brute, nefas civilia bella fatemur | sed quo fata trahunt, virtus securae sequitur. | crimen erit superis et me fecisse nocentem* ('Brutus, I allow that civil war is the worst wickedness, but Virtue will follow fearless wherever destiny summons her. It will be a reproach to the gods that they have made even me guilty', 2.286–8).

The ethical conflict between determinism and moral responsibility in Valerius' work appears even more pointed if we read Jupiter's claim *habent sua fata furores* in association with the traditional motif of the judgment in the Underworld. At the end of Book 1 of the *Argonautica* the narrator describes the two gates of the Underworld, with a vast array of allusions to the *Aeneid*.³⁷

37 Cf. McGuire (1990) 25–6; Hershkowitz (1998b) 135–6.

The first gate is always open to the sinful: this is the path Pelias will take. But the other opens by itself and only rarely, when a great hero comes.

rara et sponte patet, siquando pectore ductor
vulnera nota gerens, galeis praefixa rotisque
cui domus, aut studium mortales pellere curas,
culta fides, longe metus atque ignota cupido,
seu venit in vittis castaque in veste sacerdos.

Seldom only and of itself does it open, whenever a leader comes with glorious wounds upon his breast, whose home bears trophies of helmets and chariot-wheels, or one who strove to ease the cares of man, whose honour was kept lively, who banished fear and knew not desire, or if a priest in fillets and pure appeal draws near.

(1.836–40)

Reading the passages of Book 5 together with this description of the gate of the dead, we cannot help feeling that the ethical position of human actions is questioned by the poet. Can the reader be sure that Jason, at the end of his life, is going to enter the realm of the dead through the gate that opens so seldom? It is noteworthy, anyway, that the narrator does not define the martial achievement in itself as the only precondition for entering the Underworld through this gate, but adds the public reception of a hero's life: the symbolic visual language of the decoration of his house. Is it Jason's military bravery that will distinguish him for the members of his future community? The question remains basic to the work, and is not merely a consequence of the missing ending.³⁸

Conclusion

The *Argonautica* as an intertextually overloaded text contains an extended set of allusions to the ideological and rhetorical domain of philosophy. The major part of these references can be associated with Stoic teaching, but they cannot be limited to this most popular contemporary school of philosophy. Many times, however, it is rather difficult to decide on the origin of a particular idea represented in the text, since it is not expounded sufficiently to allow

38 This is the origin of the endless critical debate about Jason's heroism. For arguments for a critical interpretation, see Lefèvre (2012) 201–18; for an overall optimistic interpretation, see Stover (2012) 181–215.

it to be identified with the arguments of any specific school, and sometimes there were only slight divergences between the arguments of the competing sects. The typical form of the representation is when the text recalls a notorious argument known to the recipient from philosophical works by implying a rhetorical form or just a single idea of an otherwise complex theoretical problem. The most important aesthetic result is a tension between the traditional matter of epic poetry (i.e. the representation of the gods, the need for a hero etc.) and the imported intellectual world of the philosophy. How can the narrative of a heroic epic be reconciled with the idea expressed by Mopsus to help Jason dismiss his lethargy after killing the Cyzicans that every killing is a crime, but nevertheless those who killed unintentionally can find forgiveness (3.377–96)? The co-existence of a range of ideas and notions in a closed and strictly constructed plot makes constant demands for interpretation, hence it is a determinative part of the aesthetic mechanism. The representation of Stoic determinism in the passages seen above does not mean that Valerius' *Argonautica* is a Stoic reinterpretation of a traditional mythical story. The philosophical references keep their guest character in the work, and they are rather special parts of a more complex system that is not constructed according to the rules of philosophy but to those of poetry, and the latter are radically different. Philosophical ideas referred to by any character in the work, even one as important as Jupiter himself speaking in the council of gods, cannot be made the all-important key to the whole poetic world of the work.³⁹ Valerius applies these references to philosophical ideas in a pointed and sometimes inconsistent way in order to increase the aesthetic effect of his poem. Determinism, competition and personal ethical responsibility are competing ideas in the work; and the *fabula* in which they are represented never functions merely as an exemplum for these ethical paradoxes. In this light, any attempt to produce an ideological integrative reading of the text inevitably leads to frustration.

39 Cf. Zissos (2005) 79–95.

Romanas veluti saevissima cum legiones Tisiphone regesque movet: Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica and the Flavian Era

Neil W. Bernstein

Introduction

The almost complete lack of evidence regarding Valerius' life presents the greatest challenge to characterising the relationship of his *Argonautica* to the contemporary world. No definite statement can be made regarding the dates of the poem's composition. Many scholars assume that Valerius likely began the poem not long after the Flavian victory in 70. Apparent emulation of episodes of the *Argonautica* by the other Flavian epicists, such as Statius' Lemnian episode, suggests that Valerius' work indeed appeared earlier than theirs.¹ Yet a simile mentioning the eruption of Vesuvius (Val. Fl. 4.507–11) indicates that composition of the poem must have continued at least through the summer of 79. Sometime before 94, Quintilian wrote his laconic obituary notice *multum in Valerio Flacco nuper amisimus* ('We recently lost a great deal in Valerius Flaccus', *Inst.* 10.1.90), but *nuper* does not specify how 'recent' the poet's death was for Quintilian. Discussion of the question now proceeds from Stover's recent study, which makes a forceful argument that the *Argonautica* was mostly completed during the reign of Vespasian and that Quintilian's *nuper* can indeed refer to a time as long as fifteen years before. The presence of the Vesuvius simile only proves that Valerius was still working on the poem in 79; it does not require us to accept that the poet had completed no more than the fourth book. Stover argues that Valerius could have added the simile to an epic otherwise mostly complete.²

The readings that I present in this brief survey do not require that the question of the poem's dating be answered definitively. We cannot assume that each potential reflection of the contemporary world suggested by the text of Valerius' poem is the result of a discrete and clearly identifiable authorial

1 See Parkes and Augoustakis in this volume.

2 See Stover (2012a). For other perspectives on the question, see Zissos (2008) xiii–xvii.

intention. Identifying such reflections is an act of subjective interpretation performed by the reader. The methodological assumptions that guide such identifications are similar in form to those used in the study of literary intertextuality.³ The Roman world in which Valerius composed his poem is now only available to us as the product of a severely limited set of textual and archaeological discourses. Therefore acts of interpretation linking the poem to its world also represent a form of intertextual analysis, of linking Valerius' text to a series of verbal and material 'texts'. As with the study of intertextuality, then, choosing where to draw the boundaries is a subjective consideration. My mode of interpretation has more in common with the paradigmatic approach exemplified by those readers for whom Valerius analyses the imperial system of power as a whole, rather than commenting only upon the individual political decisions of his own day.⁴ Though details of the relationship between the Roman elite and the emperor varied during the brief reign of Titus and the early years of Domitian's reign, the major structures of power did not. Nor did memories of the recent civil war suddenly fade for the Roman aristocracy. Therefore while it would be welcome to know if Valerius died in 80 (or 81, or 82, or even after the supposed turn for the worse in the later years of Domitian's reign), the inability to recover such knowledge does not prevent us from seeing a clear connection between the poet's discourse and the tensions experienced by the senatorial class.

An example from the poem's first speech will illustrate the necessity of reading 'contemporary reference' with broad temporal boundaries. Pelias boasts to Jason that, were he younger and capable of taking revenge, he would display Aeetes' head as a trophy: *et regis caput hic atque arma videres* ('Here you would see the king's head and his weapons', Val. Fl. 1.52). The tyrants Amycus and Oenomaus actually enact this desire to display an enemy's head (Val. Fl. 4.183, 7.285), in the manner of Virgil's Turnus who displays the heads of Nisus and Euryalus (*Aen.* 9.465–7). Pelias' boast therefore reflects a typical pattern of tyrannical activity within the intra- and intertextual economy of the *Argonautica*.⁵ A reflection of recent history can certainly be observed here: Tacitus reports, for example, that Otho's men 'fixed the heads' of his enemies Galba and Piso 'on lances and displayed them amid the cohorts' battle standards next to the legion's eagle symbol' (*praefixa contis capita gestabantur inter signa cohortium iuxta aquilam legionis*, Tac. *Hist.* 1.44). Yet in doing

3 See Edmunds (2001) and Farrell (2005).

4 See Zissos (2003) and (2009). Contrast the hyperpunctual approach of Taylor (1994).

5 See Cowan in this volume.

so, Otho participated in a lengthy Roman tradition of vengeance. A century before, Octavian had made a similar spectacle of Brutus' head, as had Antony of Cicero's.⁶ Drawing only delimited associations (e.g. 'Pelias ~ Otho') therefore obscures the text's ability to point suggestively to traditions that stretch further back in time than the Flavian era.

The poet's circumspection in making direct reference to the contemporary world further encourages the reader to draw paradigmatic rather than punctual associations. The *Argonautica* restricts anachronistic representation of the Roman world to the proem and a handful of descriptions and similes. The devices on shields carried by mythical barbarians resemble those on Roman shields (Val. Fl. 6.55–6); an army's disorder is compared to a clash between Roman legions (6.402–12); the devastation effected by the Harpies' assault recalls the eruption of Vesuvius (4.507–11). Italian locations, all in Magna Graecia, appear in a handful of similes.⁷ The narrative also associates the consequences of some of its episodes (Jupiter's prophecy, Laomedon's crime) with the Virgilian narrative of *translatio imperii* that leads from the fall of Troy to the foundation of Rome. Yet Valerius' *Argonautica* keeps the contemporary world at a greater representational distance than either Apollonius' *Argonautica* or Virgil's *Aeneid*, the poem's two most important epic models. These earlier poems constantly associate mythical past and present with the contemporary world through aetiology, etymology, prophecy and narratorial interjection.

An earlier generation of scholars diagnosed Valerius' narrative decorum as a form of 'escapism' or 'nostalgia'. The poet's aesthetic decision to avoid relating recent history (in the manner of the Golden Age prophecies of Virgil's *Aeneid*, or Lucan's narrative of century-old history) signified artistic weakness for these critics, as did the epigonal relationship that the *Argonautica* deliberately establishes with Virgil's *Aeneid*.⁸ It is now generally accepted that, like the other Flavian epics, the *Argonautica* uses traditional myth to comment on recent history. I argue in this chapter that the poem offers a pessimistic vision of the distant mythical past in order to suggest that today's generations remain unable to escape the corrupt paradigms of their ancestors.

6 Suet. *Aug.* 13.1, Sen. *Suas.* 6.17–19. See Voisin (1984).

7 Cf. Val. Fl. 1.683 *Calabri... arvi*, 3.582 *Calabris... saeptis*, 3.729 *Calabris... arvis*. The *Martius... campus* (Val. Fl. 7.62–3) in which Jason fulfils Aeetes' labours calques Apollonius' *πεδῖον...* Ἀρήιον (Ap. Rhod. 3.409), yet also inevitably recalls the Roman site. There would presumably have been more references to Italian travel had the eighth book been completed.

8 See e.g. Williams (1978).

Religion

Roman poets traditionally associate the sailing of the 'first' ship with the moral decline that follows on the end of the Golden Age.⁹ The conclusion of Catullus' epyllion on the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, for example, makes incest, intrafamilial violence and the dissolution of marriage the consequences of the Argo's voyage (Catul. 64.397–406), a theme resumed in Seneca's *Medea*. Valerius' proem enjoins the reader instead to engage with the Argonautic narrative in terms of deep religious devotion. The narrator presents the Roman poet's traditional claim to be a *vates* favored by Apollo:¹⁰ *Phoebe, mone, si Cumaeae mihi conscia vatis | stat casta cortina domo, si laurea digna | fronte viret* ('Guide me, Apollo, if the tripod that knows the Cumaean priestess stands in my pure home, if the laurel flourishes upon my worthy forehead', Val. Fl. 1.5–7). The reference to the Sibyl's tripod has suggested the possibility of Valerius' membership in the college of *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*, interpreters of the Sibylline books (cf. Cic. *Div.* 1.4).¹¹ As virtually no biographical data regarding Valerius survive, all attempts to characterise the relationship between poet and narrator must remain matters of speculation. The proem complements its creation of a devout narratorial persona by identifying religious devotion as one of the central priorities of the Flavian ruling family. Domitian will establish divine honours and a family cult for his father Vespasian when he becomes a god upon his death: *ille tibi cultusque deum delubraque gentis | instituet* ('He [Domitian] will institute the cult of the gods for you [Vespasian] and the temples of his family', Val. Fl. 1.15–16).¹²

Jason initially appears to reflect the narrator's emphasis on religious devotion in his decision making, his ritual activity and his favourable relationship with the gods. *Religio* (Val. Fl. 1.80) helps Jason solve his first dilemma of the poem: whether he should respond obediently to the command to embark upon a quest that Pelias intends to result in his death, or raise a revolution against the usurping tyrant in order to restore his father to the throne. Jason calls on a relationship of prior service to Juno, promises her the Golden Fleece as an extraordinary future dedication, and receives an immediate positive

9 See Feeney (1991) 313–17 on the problem of the Argo's firstness.

10 See Stover (2012a) 151–79 and Deremetz in this volume on the 'Vespasianic *vates*'.

11 Other 'quindecimviral' indications include the purification ritual at Cyzicus (Val. Fl. 3.362–458) and the bath of Cybele (8.239–42). See Zissos (2008) xiv n. 8 on 'the "quindecimviral" outlook of the narrating voice'.

12 Zissos (2008) would boldly emend to *centum*; *genti* is another possibility. See Stover (2012a) 14–25 for discussion of the building. No specific building need be referenced.

response (Val. Fl. 1.81–99). Yet there has been an important shift with respect to the *Aeneid* in the representation of the hero's virtues. As Ripoll observes, 'the *pietas* of Aeneas was a goal in itself, the *religio* of Jason is a means'.¹³ *Gloria* is a far more important virtue than *pietas* for Jason, and the gods' support for his quest results in (momentary) success for him and some of his followers rather than a chapter in the destiny of an entire people.¹⁴

The proem's emphasis on the religious devotion of the narrator and the imperial family may speak to a contemporary need for the restoration of a proper relationship with the gods after the upheaval of the war of 69. Tacitus describes the war as a series of religious violations. He introduces the *Histories* with the claim *non esse curae deis securitatem nostram, esse ultionem* ('the gods are concerned with our punishment, not our freedom from anxiety', *Hist.* 1.3). The Flavian forces' assault on Rome ended the conflict with Vitellius but also resulted in the burning of the Capitol. For Tacitus, the destruction of one of Rome's most important religious sites was 'the most grievous and most disgusting crime' (*luctuosissimum foedissimumque*) to have occurred 'since the founding of the city', especially when the gods would otherwise have been 'favourable, if our morals permitted it' (*propitiis, si per mores nostros liceret, deis*, *Hist.* 3.72). Vespasian made religious restoration one of his priorities: he symbolically participated in the rebuilding of the Capitol and later dedicated a temple to Pax.¹⁵

The Argonauts' frequent reinstantiation of rites after episodes of violence is different in detail, but perhaps quite similar in concept and goal, to those performed by Romans after civil wars. After the Lemnian women have massacred the island's males, they apparently do not engage in the regular performance of sacrifice. Jason helps to revive such rituals, in particular the worship of the goddess Venus whom the Lemnians offended by withholding sacrifice. The enjambment of the main verbs in the latter two lines of the passage emphasises the renewal of sacrificial activities: *protinus ingentem procerum sub nomine taurum | deicit, insuetis et iam pia munera templis | reddit, et hac prima Veneris calet ara iuvenca* ('He first kills an enormous bull in the name of the leaders, and he returns dutiful offerings again to the temples, and for the first time Venus' altar is kindled for burning a heifer', Val. Fl. 2.329–31). The Argonauts arrive in Lemnos after the massacre and so bear no responsibility for it. Cybele's hostile intervention at Cyzicus, however, causes them to

13 Ripoll (1998) 270: 'la *pietas* d'Enée était une fin en soi, la *religio* de Jason est un moyen'.

14 See Ripoll (1998) 196–213, 258–75.

15 See Tac. *Hist.* 3.72, 4.53; Levick (1999) 126–7.

murder their hosts in an accidental night-time battle.¹⁶ They are subsequently tormented by 'so many ghosts of [their] murdered' friends (*tanta caesorum ab imagine*, 3.363). Cyzicus' welcome of the Argonauts as an *Emathiae manus* ('a war-band of Emathia', 2.640) had introduced the theme of Roman civil war, and such visitations by the ghosts of victims are a topos of civil war poetry. The remorseful visions of the dead experienced by Lucan's Caesarian troops after Pharsalus likely stand behind the account of the Argonauts' paralysing guilt at Cyzicus.¹⁷ The Argonauts undertake a collective act of expiation after the massacre (Val. Fl. 3.417–58), which succeeds in relieving the guilt caused by their unpremeditated violence and permits them to continue with their voyage.

Despite these local examples of positive interaction, the *Argonautica* characteristically negates the possibility of a beneficent relationship between populations and their gods. As in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* and Statius' *Thebaid*, the narrator emphasises the arbitrariness of the reasons for the collective punishments levied by angry goddesses at Lemnos and Cyzicus. The gods' manipulation also taints Jason's efforts to establish himself as a hero. In his first combat at Cyzicus, against friends rather than enemies, he prays to his father Aeson: *primam hanc nati, pater, accipe pugnam* ('accept this your son's first combat, father', Val. Fl. 3.81). The temporary and variable favour demonstrated by the gods to Jason and the Argonauts is outweighed by the narrative's clear indication of their future hostility. The outcome of Medea's arrival in Greece, as foreseen in Mopsus' prophecy (Val. Fl. 8.393–9), will be personal tragedy for Jason and his family and collective suffering for all of Greece in the Trojan War. The epic accordingly bears out Tacitus' verdict on the divine consequences for a society no longer able to live according to civilised *mores*. The implication is thus that no individual ritual action, even if performed by an emperor, can lead an entire society permanently back into divine favour.

Weltenplan and Flavian Conquest

The proem aligns its encomium of Vespasian with its subject, the Argonautic expedition, by celebrating the emperor's control of the sea and kindly attention to the world that he has pacified. Vespasian achieved 'greater fame' than both the Argonauts and the Julians for 'opening the sea' during Claudius' British

16 See Manuwald (1999) on this episode in general.

17 *umbra perempti | civis adest; sua quemque premit terroris imago*, Luc. 7.772–3.

campaign.¹⁸ After Vespasian's death, according to the narrator's prediction, the deified emperor will 'shine from every part of the pole' (*lucebis ab omni | parte poli*, Val. Fl. 1.16–17) to guide ships at sea. The proem apparently replays without irony Lucan's account of Nero's future catasterism (Luc. 1.45–59). Representation of the emperor as a good helmsman was also part of Flavian propaganda. Pliny, for example, praises the emperor for giving Latin rights to all of Spain when the province was 'tossed in the Republic's storms' (*iactatum procellis rei publicae*, HN 3.30). As Roman poetry commonly equates poem and sea voyage (e.g. Virg. G. 2.39–46, Hor. Carm. 1.3), Valerius' ship of poetry and epic of an heroic voyage implicitly benefits from Vespasian's providence.¹⁹

The divine council of the epic's first book presents the Jovian analogue to Vespasian's oversight of the world. Jupiter forecasts the consequences of the Argonautic expedition in a speech conventionally labelled a *Weltenplan* (1.531–67).²⁰ The long-term perspective of the speech recalls the Virgilian Jupiter's unrolling of the book of fate to Venus (*Aen.* 1.254–96), while Sol's protests (Val. Fl. 1.505–27) recall Juno's opposition at the *Aeneid*'s divine council (*Aen.* 10.1–117). The Argonauts' theft of Medea will give rise to the Trojan War, a narrative of causation familiar from the historiographical tradition. Jupiter predicts both the Trojan War that will grant the Greeks *sua tempora* and the brevity of such domination (Val. Fl. 1.543, 555–6). While Jupiter's promise that he will 'soon cherish other peoples' after the Greeks (*gentesque fovebo | mox alias*, 1.555–6) prefigures the rise of the Roman empire, it offers no guarantee that the succession of powers in fact comes to a definitive end with the Romans.²¹ There is no equivalent to the Virgilian Jupiter's promise of *imperium sine fine* ('empire without end', *Aen.* 1.279).

Though the *Weltenplan* remains unspecific regarding the Roman future, the Laomedon episode near the end of Book 2 initiates a chain of causality imagined to lead ultimately to Roman civil war. Laomedon attempts to deceive Hercules and thereby instigates the first of two sacks of Troy. In this passage, the narrator presents the outcome optimistically: the city's fall leads to 'the honours of a better Troy' in Italy (*et Troiae melioris honores*, 2.573). The narrator of Virgil's *Georgics*, however, imagines Laomedon's attempted deception of the gods as one of the originary crimes (along with the murder of Remus) that ultimately condemns Romans to engage in repeated civil wars. He accordingly

18 *tuque o pelagi cui maior aperti | fama Caledonius postquam tua carbasa vexit | Oceanus Phrygios prius indignatus Iulos*, Val. Fl. 1.7–9.

19 See Davis (1989).

20 See Wacht (1991a).

21 See Barnes (1981) and Zissos (2008) 314–15.

protests: *satis iam pridem sanguine nostro | Laomedontaeae luimus periuria Troiae* ('Long since have we atoned enough with our blood for the perjuries of Laomedon's Troy', *G.* 1.501–2). Valerius activates this intertextual memory in Jason's prayer at Cyzicus, in a narrative context that implicates Roman civil war. The prayer is uttered over the bodies of the Argonauts' former hosts, murdered in an unintended violation of *hospitium* that prefigures the larger civil war at Colchis. The language of Jason's prayer, *nec populi nostrive luant ea facta minores* ('Nor may our peoples or their descendants pay for these deeds', 3.455), represents the same (futile) attempt to protect descendants from the guilt of their ancestors' crimes. In the long term, the Argonauts' *minores* will indeed pay repeatedly, and on a far grander scale.

Divine Manipulation

The massacre of the Lemnian men foregrounds the hostile relationship between gods and the human communities who seek to live by their directives. The Lemnians pass a conventional moral judgement on the behaviour of the gods: they 'pity and succour' Vulcan (*miserentque foventque*, 2.92) when Jupiter throws him out of heaven, and then refuse to sacrifice to Venus after her adultery with Mars (2.98–100). Venus responds by sending 'raving destruction upon deserving Lemnos' (*Lemnoque merenti | exitium furiale movet*, 2.101–2). Hypsipyle hides her father Thoas during the night of the murder and becomes the leader of the Lemnian women (2.242–305). Valerius' adaptation of a central scene of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Aeneas' rescue of his father from burning Troy, focuses the attention of the reader upon the contrast between the decisions made by human beings in the context of divine manipulation. The effect is to establish a new perspective on the goddess represented in Julio-Claudian propaganda as Venus Genetrix, the foremother of the Roman race and the ancestress of the first imperial dynasty.²² The epithet 'deserving' reflects the perspective of a vengeful Venus, but the narrator does not concur. He introduces his narration of the massacre at Lemnos with a figure used frequently by Lucan's narrator, the wish that someone would 'stop him from singing true things' (*o qui me vera canentem | sistat*, 2.218–19).²³ Intertextual memory thus helps to produce an additional conceptual parallel between the Lemnian massacre and Roman civil war.

²² See Clare (2004) and Elm von der Osten (2007).

²³ E.g. Luc. 7.617–46. See D'Alessandro Behr (2007).

A programmatic scene early in the poem demonstrates the limitations of the relationship between gods and human beings in the *Argonautica*. Jason uses a cup belonging to his father Aeson, who received it from Salmoneus, the Virgilian *contemptor divum* (*Aen.* 6.585–6), to pour libations after the storm (1.659–65). Jason makes clear through his language and actions that he shares none of the madman's opposition to the gods. Yet, as Feeney observes, the object itself communicates the transgressive nature of the expedition.²⁴ Jason's pleas speak to his awareness of offending the gods through the Argo's passage through physical limits that also represent moral boundaries: *haec luerim satis et tua numina, rector, | iam fuerint meliora mihi* ('May I now have repaid enough, and, leader, may your divine presence already have become more propitious to me', 1.674–5). The gods who inspire the voyage bear partial responsibility for the 'crime' of sailing that they wish to attribute to Jason and the Argonauts.

Jason's prayers are only granted in the short term: the storm ceases, and the ghosts of the victims of Cyzicus do not trouble the Argonauts after the expiatory ritual. Yet rather than the world imagined in the *concilium deorum*, one under the rational, benevolent control of the Olympian deities, the *Argonautica* instead shows a world of flux and contingency. Juno withholds the news of his father's death from Jason to keep him focused on his voyage (2.1–5). Jason recognises the reality of divine manipulation as he guides the Argo through the Clashing Rocks: *'sequor, o quicumque deorum' | Aesonides 'vel fallis' ait* ('"Whoever of the gods you are, I follow", says Aeson's son, "even if you are deceiving me"', 4.674–5). Here, as elsewhere, Valerius plays ironic games with the contrast between the characters' and the reader's perceptions of the chain of causality.²⁵ Though the Argonauts cannot perceive it, their adventures give rise to consequences that impinge upon the futures of several groups of innocent people. The pessimistic narrative accordingly implies that any claim that contemporary Roman leaders have restored the world to a beneficent relationship with the gods must be understood in an equally provisional sense.

Dynastic Competition

Conflict between family members, friends and fellow citizens provides the basic narrative paradigm for the *Argonautica*. Three fraternal conflicts provide the epic with its narrative superstructure. The submerged conflict between

²⁴ See Feeney (1991) 333.

²⁵ See Manuwald (2009).

Jason's father Aeson and his uncle Pelias provides the immediate stimulus for Jason's mission. An earlier intrafamilial conflict, provoked by Ino's hostility to her husband's children by his former wife Nephele, caused the removal of the Fleece to Colchis. Upon receiving Pelias' command, Jason contemplates rousing the *patres* in sympathy with Aeson against his usurping uncle (1.71–3), in a passage that has long been read as a reflection of Julio-Claudian imperial politics.²⁶ His subsequent decision to comply with his uncle's demand therefore constitutes a conscious deferral of dynastically motivated civil war.

The narrative immediately complements the deferred conflict over the throne at Iolcus by sketching a similarly submerged conflict between divine brothers. Jason's mission advances Jupiter's side in his conflict with his brother Neptune and his father Saturn. According to the narrator, the Argonauts' civilising mission represents an advancement of the world into the age of Jupiter, dispelling 'the idleness of his father [Saturn]'s reign' (*patrii . . . otia regni*, 1.500). Jupiter's ambitions bring him into conflict with his brother Neptune, who is made to open his sea to human *commercia* (1.246) and to grieve at the killing of his son Amycus (4.114–32). As civil war in heaven is an impossibility, the gods maintain keen interest in the success of their proxies. Jason arrives at Colchis to find another pair of royal brothers, Aeetes and Perses, fighting over their father's throne. The Argonauts' participation in this civil war temporarily tips the balance in Aeetes' favour but ultimately leaves the king defeated, bereft of his daughter Medea and son Absyrtus.

The proem opposes the harmony of the Flavian ruling family to the destructive competition of the epic's rulers. Valerius' Domitian composes poetry in honour of his brother Titus' conquest of Jerusalem and will one day dedicate temples to the deified members of his family (1.12–16). The proem's praise of Titus' foreign victory implicitly answers the plea in the proem to Lucan's *Bellum Civile* for Romans to make external rather than civil war (Luc. 1.8–23). The cooperation between Vespasian's sons stands in punctual contrast to the tyrannies imposed by the usurping pairs of brothers at Iolcus and Colchis. There is also an implicit contrast with the end of the preceding Julio-Claudian dynasty: Nero murdered his half-brother Britannicus, the legitimate heir to Claudius' throne. The contrast between the Flavian emperors, their imperial predecessors and the monarchs of the poem highlights the legitimate transfer of power from Vespasian to his sons. Such harmony promises that Flavian rule will be beneficent and secure. After the proem, however, the epic never again offers a positive representation of monarchical power. Tyranny is the default mode of government, and violent resistance erupts as soon as the tyrant's grip

26 See Summers (1894) and Stover in this volume.

is compromised. The Flavians' momentary provision of security does not imply that the system that they oversee provides permanent stability. Much depends on the goodwill and power of the incumbent.

Civil War

The civil war at Colchis occupies the majority of the sixth book of the *Argonautica*. The book opens with an early signal to read the war in explicitly Roman terms. A troop of Scythians appears with a triple thunderbolt engraved on their shields, which the narrator identifies as a characteristically Roman military symbol: *nec primus radios, miles Romane, corusci | fulminis et rutilas scutis diffuderis alas* ('Nor, Roman soldier, were you the first to spread with your shields the thunderbolt's vibrating rays and flaming wings', 6.55–6). Later in the battle, Ariasmenus sends his squadron of scythe-bearing chariots against the combined Colchian and Greek forces. Pallas repulses the assault by spreading confusion among his troops with her aegis. The narrator represents the disorder with an extended comparison to a battle between Roman legions in a civil war:

Romanas veluti saevissima cum legiones	
Tisiphone regesque movet, quorum agmina pilis,	
quorum aquilis utrimque micant eademque parentes	
rura colunt, idem lectos ex omnibus agris	405
miserat infelix non haec ad proelia Thybris:	
sic modo concordēs externaque fata petentes	
Palladii rapuere metus, sic in sua versi	
funera concurrunt dominis revocantibus axes.	
non tam foeda virum Laurentibus agmina terris	410
eiecere Noti, Libyco nec talis imago	
litore cum fractas involvunt aequora puppes.	

It was just as when most savage Tisiphone moves Roman legions and their rulers, whose battle-lines flash with spears and eagles on both sides, whose parents tend the same countryside. The same unfortunate river Tiber had sent from all the fields men chosen not for battles like these. Just so even now terror inspired by Pallas seized men united in seeking the deaths of foreigners; just so chariots rush together, turned towards their own destruction even as their masters call them back. Not so disorderly are the ranks of men whom the South winds spit up on Italian

shores, nor is there such a sight on the Libyan shore when the waves toss
the shattered ships.

(6.402–12)

The double simile aligns two contrasting types of groups: the cosmopolitan forces gathered at Colchis and the Roman legionaries who are imagined to have identical ethnic origins, all raised on the banks of the Tiber. The simile's tenor and vehicle attribute different species of divine motivation to the two groups. The Fury Tisiphone generates the *furor* which causes Roman civil war; here the fear inspired by Pallas disrupts an internally unified force (*concordes*) engaged in war's legitimate purpose, the destruction of an external enemy (*externaque fata petentes*). The civil war theme continues in the second simile comparing the violence to shipwreck. Virgil twice compares sea storm to Roman civil conflict, first in the storm that batters Aeneas on the Libyan coast (*Aen.* 1.148–56; cf. *Libyco . . . litore* in the present simile) and next in the complaints of Latinus as he is unable to restrain his people from rushing into the war in Italy (*Aen.* 7.585–94). On one level, Valerius' simile appears to create an ideological non sequitur from the concept of 'disorder'. The random disorder caused by terrified chariot drivers would seem at first glance to have nothing to do with the purposeful destruction of Roman legions driven by demonic fury. The apparent conceptual disjuncture, however, calls attention to the capriciousness of the gods' favour. The gods who currently favour the Argonauts have earlier effected destruction at Lemnos and Cyzicus, and will soon doom Aeetes, though they help him win the day's battle against his brother. Valerius' association between Colchian and Roman civil war calls attention to the political contingency of his world. Social stability is always at the mercy of ambitious claimants to power and the capricious divinities who back them.

Recurrent episodes of intrafamilial and intranecine conflict parallel the narrative superstructure determined by the two 'cold' civil wars in Iolcus and in heaven and the one 'hot' civil war at Colchis. The Lemnian women bring civil conflict to the interpersonal level of the household when they slaughter their husbands as the result of divine instigation. The Argonauts slaughter their former hosts at Cyzicus, again as the result of divine malice: a vengeful Cybele disrupts the ties of reciprocal benefaction that theoretically hold human society together (e.g. *Sen. Ben.* 1.4.2). The *terrigenae* who erupt from the ground as Jason sows the dragon's teeth are immediately compelled by Medea's magic to slaughter their own 'wretched brothers in their own battles' (*et miseros agit in sua proelia fratres*, 7.638). This traditional image of civil war, employed earlier as a comparison in Ovid (*Met.* 3.115–23) and Lucan (4.549–56), here appears in its original narrative context as a reflection in miniature of the epic's other

civil wars. The hostile landscapes of the Argonauts' journey present further visual analogues of civil war, such as the battle of the winds (1.574–692) that Virgil had likened to a riotous mob in need of a statesman's control (*Aen.* 1.148–56; see above). Valerius adds a further motif of intrafamilial conflict to his sea storm: the wind Boreas expresses indifference to the possibility that his storm might cause the death of his sons Zetes and Calais, who are sailing with the Argonauts: *nil me mea pignora tangunt* ('My children affect me not at all', 1.605). Though the proem celebrates Flavian control of a pacified world, the narrative is preoccupied with the civil and familial tensions that can erupt into violence at any moment.

The World of the Flavian Courtier

The pressure on subordinate characters to dissimulate before more powerful figures, such as the gods or the tyrants Pelias and Aeetes, has been a major source of interest in recent studies of the *Argonautica*. Jason is not simply an innocent victim of tyrannical control over communication, but capable of mimicking the tyrants' stratagems when he withholds information from his crew and Medea.²⁷ Nor is he the type of leader compared to a benevolent father: in contrast to *pater* Aeneas, Jason is typically called *iuvēnis* ('young man'), and it is the helmsman Tiphys, not the captain Jason, who is mourned as the symbolic 'father' of the ship when he dies (5.22–6).²⁸ Valerius' emphasis on dissimulation has often been read as a reflection of the contemporary world of the Flavian court, where members of the senatorial class had decisively lost their conflict over authority to the emperor.²⁹

The *Argonautica* presents a world in which domination by hostile gods and tyrants has made it all but impossible for less powerful figures to practise the ordinary virtues of honesty and reciprocity. As in the epics of Lucan and Statius,³⁰ Valerius shows the corruption of the virtuous cycle of reciprocity that underwrites Roman aristocratic society. As the narrator early on observes, *virtusque haut laeta tyranno* ('valour is not at all welcome to a tyrant', 1.30), and

27 See Hershkowitz (1998b) 242–4 and Zissos (2009). The Argonauts rebuke Jason for thinking that the point of the expedition was for him to find a wife, let alone one who would ultimately cause the Trojan War (8.385–99). Medea is aware of Jason's lying (8.410–12). The gods engage in similar efforts at deception: both Minerva and Venus, for example, also know when Juno is lying to them (3.506–7, 6.467).

28 For leader-as-father analogies in Roman literature, see Bernstein (2008) 23–5.

29 See Bernstein (2008) 16–25.

30 See Coffee (2008).

Come on now, you bandit, why didn't you want to steal holy offerings from every temple and to kidnap daughters from their parents' laps? How can I think you have homes and parents? Your ship alone and the fierce tempest feed you with unspeakable plundering. Your king threw you on the waves and ordered you not to return—to believe you, so that he could take possession of the Aeolian ram's fleece!

(7.48–54)

Though Aeetes' response is in keeping with his tyrannical character, even a more lenient monarch might find it difficult to give up the world's most valuable prize freely. The tirade, however, also contradicts Jupiter's enthusiastic promotion of the Argonauts' raid as the virtuous pursuit of *gloria*. A proximate epic model is Lucan's vituperation of Alexander *felix praedo* ('the lucky bandit', 10.20–52), a rebuttal of a lengthy Hellenistic rhetorical tradition where the beneficent conqueror brings the world together as a unity.³⁴ Phineus' claim that the world east of his realm awaits Jason's *mission civilatrice* is accordingly an ethnocentric oversimplification of a far more complex situation, in which the Argonauts are as much perpetrators of deception against their hosts as victims of deceptive hospitality.

Valerius and his World

The *Argonautica* offers a grim view of the limitations of sociable co-existence. It undermines the optimism of the proem's praise of the ruling family and the expansive vision of Jupiter's prophecy by embedding both in a world ruled by tyrants who usurp thrones, oppress their subjects and make civil war. While such topoi might be expected in epics such as Lucan's *Bellum Civile* or Statius' *Thebaid*, civil war was not a predictable element in an epic of romance and adventure. So far as we can tell, the civil war episode at Colchis is Valerius' innovation on the Argonautic tradition.³⁵ Earlier Roman epic tradition made available many of the narrative paradigms that Valerius skilfully deploys. Virgil's war in Latium provides the basic model for Valerius' civil war at Colchis: strangers arrive in response to fate's predictions to help a monarch deal with his enemies. Ovid's Perseus and Medea episodes (*Met.* 4.604–5.241, 7.1–403) offer the model for the romance hero who depends on constant divine assistance

34 Visible, for example, in the contemporary Plutarch's *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute*, *Mor.* 326d–345b.

35 See Fucecchi (2006) and Wijsman (2000b).

and the heroine who betrays her family and unexpectedly takes control of the narrative. Comparison with the ending of Statius' *Thebaid*, which introduces the figure of Theseus, throws Valerius' pessimism into sharper relief. Though infected with the other characters' *furor*, the Athenian king is still attentive to the Argive women's pleas for justice and also powerful enough to take action in response to them. Characters in his world can at least hope that he will exercise his *clementia* in a beneficial direction, though Statius has made clear that they have no other recourse beyond that hope.³⁶ There is no such beneficent figure in Valerius, where the powerful are uniformly brutal and deceptive.

The contemporary audience's preoccupations likely contributed to determining the extent of the representation of civil war in the *Argonautica*. Valerius writes for survivors of a recent civil war who looked to an autocrat to restore and preserve security. Though scornful and tendentious, Tacitus' picture in *Historiae* 4 of a Senate that surrenders control to Vespasian willingly and almost unanimously (with the exception of the marginalised Helvidius Priscus) nevertheless suggests this audience's priorities. Valerius' poem reflects the elite Flavian audience's understanding of the disunity of the aristocratic family, the fragility of the state, the marginalisation of the senatorial class, and the inevitability of tyrannical rule.³⁷ The *Argonautica* presents a contrast to Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, whose retrospective manner speaks to a lengthy era of peace and stability. The historical epic certainly advances criticisms of the imperial dynasty: it is difficult to accept without ironic reservations the proem's argument that history has led to a providential culmination in Nero's reign, especially when coupled with the blunt condemnation of the deification of the Caesars through civil war (Luc. 7.457–9). Yet for an audience in the early 60s, the most recent civil war between Antony and Octavian was almost beyond living memory, and the failed rebellions under Claudius had likely made no difference to their lives. Lucan's narrator endeavours to engage the reader as an active, critical witness to history through encouragement of sympathetic identification with the losing side and frequent protestations against the course of events.³⁸ Such efforts at incitement are needless in the *Argonautica*. Valerius' reticent pessimism engages an audience of survivors far more directly.³⁹

36 See Ganiban (2007) 207–32.

37 See Zissos (2009).

38 See D'Alessandro Behr (2007).

39 My thanks to Mark Heerink and Gesine Manuwald for their generous comments, suggestions and stimuli. Neil Coffee, Yi-Ting Wang, Tim Stover and Andrew Zissos kindly and patiently discussed many of the issues raised in this chapter.

PART 3
Characters



A Hero with a Sandal and a Buskin: The Figure of Jason in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Cristiano Castelletti

Introduction

Valerian critics have devoted much attention to the figure of Medea, while Jason, on the contrary, has inspired fewer and thoroughly contrasting readings. This chapter aims to offer an overall view of the figure of Jason in the *Argonautica*, by shedding light on his evolution during the narrative, on the basis of some crucial passages.

Valerius Flaccus' Jason shows similarities not only with his main literary models, i.e. Apollonius Rhodius' Jason and Virgil's Aeneas, but also with Homeric heroes (such as Odysseus) and the Jason of Greek and Latin tragedies (Euripides' or Seneca's). To understand this character fully one must also take into account that the concerns of a Flavian poet would have been quite different from those of the Alexandrian Apollonius, as well as from those that Virgil would have had at the beginning of the Principate. Valerius' efforts to render Apollonius' rather passive Jason, who is characterised by *amechania*, more heroic and more like Virgil's *pious Aeneas*¹ paved the way for two profoundly diverse interpretative currents. The first, inspired by Lüthje (1971), brands Jason as a failed hero, a hypocrite, a selfish, ambitious and ruthless man.² The other, pioneered by Adamietz (1976), sees in Jason an example of pure heroism.³ Between these two opposing visions one finds contributions such as those of Spaltenstein and Ripoll, who suggest that single episodes in the epic reveal different traits of character according to the author's poetic intentions,

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- 1 On the significance of the figure of Aeneas for Valerius Flaccus' Jason, see e.g. Hull (1979) 386–7; Pollini (1984) 55; 58–9; Lefèvre (1991) 178; Moreau (1994) 185–6; Ferenczi (1995) 147–8; Hershkowitz (1998b) 105–128.
 - 2 See also Lewis (1984); Lefèvre (1991); Wacht (1991b) for this negative interpretation of Jason.
 - 3 The strongest advocate of this positively heroic Jason is Hull (1979). Other supporters are e.g. Cecchin (1984); Taylor (1994) 223–4; Hershkowitz (1998b) 50–7, 105–28.

which tend to privilege *pathos* over *ethos*.⁴ On the basis of these premises, let us follow the poetic narrative with a closer look at Valerius' work on the figure of Jason.

Introducing a (New) Hero

Critics have widely discussed Apollonius Rhodius' interpretation of Jason and labelled him in various different ways, including 'love hero', 'realistic human being' or 'anti-hero'. This last characterisation in particular, supported by the many situations revealing Jason's *amechania*, conveys an overall negative image, a point of view not all scholars share. At any rate, although their interpretations vary, critics tend to agree that Apollonius' Jason differs from the traditional Homeric hero.⁵

Valerius mainly performs two operations to bestow heroic qualities on Jason in his *Argonautica*: 'correcting' Apollonius' Jason and rendering him more Virgilian.⁶ This is apparent from the first mention of the hero (1.22–36): Pelias, who had been warned by his oracles that the son of his brother would cause him to lose his throne and his life, is presented as a malevolent, fearful despot. By contrast, Jason is immediately portrayed as a hero, whose *fama* and *virtus* worry the tyrant. This vision strongly contrasts with the anonymous description of a man wearing only one sandal with which Apollonius refers to Jason at the beginning of his poem (Ap. Rhod. 1.5–7). In the opening scenes of the epic, Valerius sets up the antagonism between the hero and his enemy, representing a *vir-tyrannus* pattern⁷ which brings out an opposition between good and evil. Moreover, Jason is immediately compared to a great

4 Spaltenstein (2002) 115; Ripoll (1998) 88–94, 167–76, 266–74, (2003a), (2004), (2008). See also Cecchin (1984).

5 The literature on the heroism of Apollonius' Jason is vast. For the notion of his anti-heroism, see Lawall (1966), an assessment that Hunter (1988) seeks to counter. On Jason as a love-hero, see Beye (1969), followed by Zanker (1979) and DeForest (1994). On Jason as a 'diplomatic hero', see Clauss (1993). For a combination of these two interpretations, see Heerink (forthcoming b). For other discussions of Apollonius' Jason, see Hunter (1993) 15–25; Clauss (1997); Köhnken (2000); Gleit (2008) 6–12. For the degradation of the figure of Jason in Euripides and later, see in particular Moreau (1994) 173–90.

6 Besides Adamietz (1970) and (1976) and Hull (1979), see Hershkowitz (1998b) 105–28, who emphasises the differences between Apollonius and Valerius Flaccus, and Stover (2012a) 181–218, who also interprets Valerius' recuperative operation as a response to Lucan's assault on the very concept of martial *virtus*. Cf. Stover in this volume.

7 Observed by Adamietz (1976) 7. See also Cecchin (1984) 273–4.

hero of the poem, Hercules, who has completed most of the labours that will earn him apotheosis. Just like the Tirynthian hero, Jason is given what seems at first an impossible task to complete: to seize the Golden Fleece. By imposing this task upon him, Pelias reveals darker sides to his personality. Indeed, besides being an iniquitous despot, he is lying and deceitful (*fictis* . . . *dictis*, 'to his false words', 1.39; *taciti* . . . *doli*, 'silent deceptions', 1.64), and does not warn Jason about the terrible dragon guarding the Fleece in Colchis (1.59–63). The tyrant's negative traits also bring out Jason's heroic qualities: the young man, despite having seen straight through Pelias' malicious intentions, decides not to spark an insurrection (and therefore a civil war),⁸ but agrees to embark on this adventure, from a desire for glory (1.71–8).

Getting Ready for the Expedition

On several occasions in Apollonius' epic, it becomes clear that Jason sets out on his quest because he has to and not because he wants to.⁹ In Valerius, Jason willingly accepts to lead this expedition, although he has some reservations, being fully aware that he does not possess the superhuman capacities needed to complete the task allotted to him (1.67–70). Jason's decision to accept the task is motivated by his desire for *gloria*, and in this he differs radically from his Apollonian model.¹⁰ Valerius' Jason rather resembles a Homeric kind of hero, whose quest for *κλέος* ('glory') is a fundamental (and positive) quality.¹¹

Besides the desire for *gloria*, *religio* ('religious reverence')¹² is also a motivation for Jason's expedition.¹³ In 1.79–90 Jason prays to Juno and Pallas to help him in his undertaking. Consequently, the goddesses immediately start organising the preparation of the ship and the crew. The trust the Valerian Jason puts in the gods and, most of all, his awareness of being protected and supported by the divinities, once more distinguish him from his Apollonian model. Indeed, the latter addresses Apollo in a prayer before embarking on the voyage (Ap. Rhod. 1.411–24), but he is only vaguely aware of Athena's assistance and

8 On the implications of the choice between civil and foreign war, see Zissos (2008) 123. See also Stover in this volume.

9 See Hershkowitz (1998b) 107.

10 For the difference in motivations between Apollonius' and Valerius' Jason, see Hershkowitz (1998b) 108.

11 In Valerius' poem, Jason and the Argonauts are all driven by a Homeric quest for glory (Ripoll (1998) 206–8; Zissos (2005) 505), which is generally considered to be a positive undertaking (see e.g. Ripoll (1998) 201–10). Contra e.g. Pederzani (1988) 24; Lefèvre (1991).

12 On the complexity of the term *religio* (in Val. Fl. 1.80), see Zissos (2008) 127.

13 On the controversial issue of the relative importance of *gloria* and *religio* for Jason's eventual decision to go on the voyage, see Manuwald (2009) 591–2.

seems to know nothing about Hera's plans to protect him. Valerius' Jason is credited with *pietas*, a virtue we know Aeneas embodied and which Virgil undoubtedly values more than the desire to achieve personal glory.

However, one must be careful when evaluating this virtue in the *Argonautica*.¹⁴ Indeed, on the one hand the Virgilian notion of *pietas* plays a limited role in Valerius; on the other, Jason's *pietas* never reaches the depth of Aeneas', as Jason contents himself with the strict observance of religious rituals, which he performs as the expedition's military and religious leader. Like the other human protagonists of the *Argonautica*, Jason is never fully aware of the divine dimension of the mission entrusted to him,¹⁵ and the lack of communication between gods and humans is not without considerable consequences.¹⁶ By contrast, the relationship between Aeneas and the gods is much more intimate, conscious and involved (owing also to his semi-divine origin). Aeneas deliberately surrenders to destiny's superior reasons and Jupiter's plans, in order to preserve the cosmic order. In this respect, as we will see later, Valerius makes Hercules a more convincing embodiment of Virgilian *pietas* than Jason.¹⁷

The dolus

While Pelias' cruel schemes against Jason have introduced his characteristic perversity and deceit, Jason himself is endowed with the same negative traits in the scene in which Pelias' son, Acastus, is recruited (1.149–83).¹⁸ In Apollonius (1.321–3), Acastus willingly enrolls on the expedition, whereas in Valerius it is Jason who resorts to *dolus* ('trickery') in order to convince the youth to go. In doing so, he secures the presence on board, as a kind of hostage, of the son of the man who ordered his impossible mission, thereby forcing the tyrant to hope for a successful outcome. The situation mirrors the confrontation between Jason and Pelias, where the roles are reversed. Now the young man looking for glory is Acastus, whereas the deceiver is Jason.

14 On *pietas* in the *Argonautica*, see mainly Ripoll (1998) 258–75. See also Zissos (2008) 128.

15 Wacht (1991b) 106 emphasises Jason's lack of vocation, in comparison with Virgil's Aeneas.

16 On this lack of communication between gods and humans in Valerius' poem, see Ripoll (1998) 274; Groß (2003) 175–83, 239–49; Manuwald (2009); Río Torres-Murciano (2011b) 144–92.

17 On Hercules' embodiment of Virgilian *pietas*, see Garson (1963) 261–2 and Ripoll (1998) 263–5. See also Heerink (forthcoming b) on Hercules and his association with the *Aeneid* in the Hylas episode.

18 For bibliography on this episode, see Zissos (2008) 167 and Río Torres-Murciano (2011b) 123–43.

Critics have expressed contradictory opinions on the meaning of this duplicity on the part of Jason.¹⁹ What appears less questionable, however, is that this scene is part of an elaborate subplot involving a series of scenes that build up to the catastrophic finale of Book 1, in which Pelias exterminates Jason's family in retaliation for his recruitment of Acastus, but also to the later 'kidnapping' of another royal child, Medea.²⁰ Both of these 'abductions' will have tragic outcomes, making Jason's triumphs ephemeral. According to some scholars, the way this situation evolves reveals characteristics of *imprudencia* in Jason's character:²¹ like a figure from tragedy, he seems incapable of predicting the enormous, dramatic and uncontrollable consequences of his deeds.²²

Who Is the Leader?

At line 164 Jason is called *ductor* (an elevated, mainly poetic, synonym for *dux*) for the first time. As an epic on a collective expedition, the *Argonautica* is not a '*Jasoneid*'. However, right from the start Valerius clearly casts Jason as leader, once again moving away from his Greek model. For instance, Valerius eliminates the scene in which, when Jason asks the Argonauts to elect as their leader the bravest, most careful and most diplomatic man, the crew unanimously chooses Hercules (Ap. Rhod. 1.338–43). It is only when Hercules refuses and orders his companions to pick Jason (1.345–7) that the latter readily takes on the command of the expedition, not realising that his authority has just been seriously questioned. Valerius' Jason, however, immediately appears as the one and only *ductor* and plays this part until the arrival in Colchis. Of course, the succession of events occasionally highlights other Argonauts' personalities, but (at least until Colchis) Jason maintains a status and an authority far superior to that of his Greek counterpart, who is frequently perceived as only a *primus inter pares*.²³

19 E.g. Shey (1968) 34–5, Lüthje (1971) 13–15, Zissos (2008) 167 and Río Torres-Murciano (2011b) 123–43 think that Jason's *dolus* brings out a distinctively negative aspect of his personality. Contra Cecchin (1984) 277–8, who argues that Jason is credited with astuteness and sagacity (traditional qualities of Odysseus), and Ripoll (1998) 198–200, who interprets Jason's cunning as a weapon against Pelias' wickedness which leaves Acastus unharmed.

20 Zissos (2008) 167.

21 E.g. Lüthje (1971) 22–7, 48–9. Contra Ripoll (1998) 267.

22 Scaffai (1986a) 248.

23 Cf. Lewis (1984) 92; Hunter (1988) 441. Hershkowitz (1998b) 114 points out that this definition does not entirely fit Valerius' Jason, as several passages emphasise his superiority over the other Argonauts.

Lemnos

The Lemnos episode is emblematic of Valerius' efforts to recuperate Jason's heroism. In Apollonius, Jason, while aware of his duties (Ap. Rhod. 1.839–41), follows most of his companions in indulging in the pleasures offered by the Lemnian women. Hercules, who has refrained from doing so, urges the Argonauts to return to their mission, and admonishes Jason, reproaching him sarcastically for his behaviour (Ap. Rhod. 1.872–4).

In Valerius, too, the Argonauts take pleasure in the female company on Lemnos, but Hercules' intervention takes quite a different turn (2.375–84). Instead of scolding the entire crew, Hercules addresses Jason only, almost begging him; his tone is neither sarcastic nor derogatory. While he wants to convince the *ductor* of the Argonauts to return to his mission, he does not undermine his *auctoritas* in front of the crew.²⁴ Critics tend to agree that in his speech Hercules holds himself as a heroic example for Jason, but interpretations differ regarding the significance of Hercules' words for Jason's heroism.²⁵ At any rate, Alcides shows the way to go, and Jason's prompt reaction (2.384–92) reveals a completely different attitude from that of his Greek counterpart (Ap. Rhod. 1.875–6). Furthermore, he seems more resolute and determined than Aeneas in his response to Mercury's order to leave Carthage (*Aen.* 4.279–90).²⁶

Jason's determination to leave Hypsipyle and close the Lemnian amorous interlude also corresponds to the poet's intention to bring the poem back onto a more epic path and to recast Jason as an epic hero. This is reflected in a metapoetic reference to *arma virumque* in the last two verses of the episode (2.391–2).²⁷ We will return to the important and controversial issue of the relation between Hercules and Jason, but first we shall follow the narrative, taking a closer look at what is in fact Jason's first battle opportunity.²⁸

Cyzicus

As the king of Cyzicus greets him, Jason spontaneously offers to help him should his enemies, the Pelasgians, attack his people, the Doliones. This immediate,

24 See Adamietz (1970) 31; Hershkowitz (1998b) 115.

25 Wacht ((1991b) 120) and Hershkowitz ((1998b) 115) believe that Hercules is expressing his and Jason's common intentions, emphasising the desire for glory they share. Contra Lüthje (1971) 74.

26 The Virgilian passage has clearly inspired Valerius' scene. On the difference between these scenes, see Wacht (1991b) 120; Hershkowitz (1998b) 117.

27 On the implications of *arma viros* here as referring to the first line of the *Aeneid*, see Feeney (1991) 323 and Hershkowitz (1998b) 117.

28 On the Cyzicus episode in Valerius (2.627–3.458), see Fucecchi (1996) 119–22; Manuwald (1999); Schenk (1999); Stover (2012a) 113–50.

disinterested and heroic reaction reflects Jason's desire to present himself as a Homeric martial hero and renders him more similar to Apollonius' Hercules than to his Jason.²⁹ Despite the fact that his adversaries in the ensuing battle are none other than the Doliones whose hospitality the Argonauts have just enjoyed, Jason's heroic spirit in the battle, and in particular in the dramatic scene in which he kills King Cyzicus (3.239–41), proves he is worthy of an epic warrior.³⁰ Another significant difference from Apollonius, who blamed the war with Cyzicus on an embarrassing blunder (Ap. Rhod. 1.1053–6), is the fact that the unfortunate episode does not tarnish Jason's image. On the contrary, the killing was planned by Cybele as a retaliation for the offence the king committed against her (see 3.19–31), and Jason therefore (albeit unwittingly) becomes the agent of the divine will that punishes the *contemptor divum*.³¹ Besides his martial prowess, Jason here also displays several kinds of *pietas*: with regard to the gods, but also to his friends, as he mourns the death of King Cyzicus and performs his funeral rites (3.283–313), and to his father, to whom he dedicates his first battle (3.81).

The Symplegades

The crucial episode of the crossing of the Symplegades confirms several aspects hinted at previously. Indeed, unlike in Apollonius, whose two main characters in this scene are Tiphys and Euphemus, Valerius' only prominent figure is Jason. Besides encouraging his companions (4.647–53), Jason also represents an exemplum, for instance when he takes a particularly frightened companion's oar and orders him to return to his duties (4.654–5). He also conceals his fear so as not to discourage the rest of the crew (4.703), which proves he has the necessary qualities to be a *ductor*. A similar situation had occurred at the end of Book 3, where most of the Argonauts were in favour of giving up the search for Hercules in Mysia and left him behind. Unlike his Greek counterpart, Valerius' Jason did not fully surrender to despair, despite the distress the loss of his hero and friend caused him (cf. Ap. Rhod. 1.1286–9). Instead, he adopted an attitude more similar to Virgil's Aeneas, hiding his sadness and tears (3.718).³²

The crossing of the Symplegades has a positive outcome, thanks to Juno and Pallas' divine intervention. Once more, however, Jason's perception of the

29 See Fucecchi (1996) 120.

30 See Hershkowitz (1998b) 119–20.

31 See Lüthje (1971) 93 and Hershkowitz (1998b) 172–5. Stover (2012a) 113–50 reads the whole war in Cyzicus as a terrestrial Gigantomachy, more specifically a battle between Jovian (the Argonauts) and anti-Jovian forces (the Doliones).

32 See Hershkowitz (1998b) 119.

goddesses' contribution is quite different from the one Aeneas would have had. Indeed, before the crossing, although he does recognise a divine omen in a bolt of lightning in the sky, he has no idea which divinity has sent it (4.674). Once the deed has been accomplished, Jason's only comment, *heu qui datus iste deorum | sorte labor nobis* ('alas, what a hard task is set here for us by heaven's will', 4.704–5), reveals he is aware that a divine will has favoured the undertaking, but he has no way of knowing which divinity, or for what purpose.

Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder: Medea and the New World

Upon arrival in Colchis, a new character enters the stage who will leave an indelible mark on Jason's fate: Medea. The change of atmosphere is clearly emphasised by the concepts of *furor*, *nefas* and *horror*, which are expressed in the programmatic second proem: *ventum ad furias infandaque natae | foedera et horrenda trepidam sub virgine puppem | impia monstri feris surgunt iam proelia campis* ('We have come to the madness and unholy compact of the princess, and how the vessel shuddered beneath the terrible maid; the accursed contests on the portent-bearing fields arise before me', 5.219–21). Medea's entrance threatens not only to change Jason's character, but also to shift his concern from the Argonauts as a group to Medea as an individual, and therefore from the group's welfare to his own selfish interests. On a larger scale, Medea also challenges the very genre of the epic, by introducing the element of love. As we will see, critics have expressed contrasting views on these questions, but they all agree on one thing: from the moment the Argonauts land in Colchis, the figure of Jason is seen almost exclusively through the filter of Medea's eyes.

When Jason Met Medea

That something is about to change is already apparent from the first encounter between Jason and Medea.³³ As in Apollonius (3.919–26), Juno improves Jason's looks, bringing out his beauty and strong presence, characteristics the Latin poet had not emphasised before. The stunning Jason is compared to

33 For specific similarities of this scene with the Homeric and Virgilian models, see e.g. Garson (1969) 363 and Hershkovitz (1998b) 95–7. See also Stover (2012a) 191–8 for a discussion of Ovidian echoes, marking Medea's appearance in Valerius' epic as an intrusion that problematises Jason's status and threatens to subvert the heroic thrust of the narrative by enervating its hero. For other Ovidian elements in this episode, see Keith in this volume. On the connections between this passage and Hylas and Hercules in Book 3, see Heerink (forthcoming a).

Sirius (5.368–72), the brightest star in the sky, and the simile confers a cosmic dimension on his beauty.³⁴ On the other hand, the symbolism of the Dog Star is notoriously ambiguous. In Latin poetry, and particularly in elegy, Sirius is often found in contexts that explicitly contrast martial and amatory themes.³⁵ This emphasises the fact that at this stage, the heroism, authority and virility of the main character are challenged by Medea's presence.

In the following lines, Medea and Jason find themselves face to face (5.373–7). Although they are not alone, the astonished Medea cannot keep her eyes off the commander, and does not notice the other Argonauts. As for Jason, his gaze is fixed on Medea, whom he recognises as *dux* and *domina* (5.377). The choice of such words (alluding to the elegiac topos of *servitium amoris*)³⁶ denotes an amorous context, threatening to make a love slave out of Jason and to turn him away from his duties to his companions.

Jason is marked also by another encounter: the one with Aeetes, Medea's father, which gives him the opportunity not only to prove his political and diplomatic talents,³⁷ but also, and most importantly, to cast himself not only as a *ductor* but as a hero. Indeed, Aeetes promptly reveals himself as a tyrant in the same vein as Pelias,³⁸ providing a *vir-tyrannus* antithesis similar to the one in the first book.³⁹ Moreover, this time it is Jason who compares his fate to that of Hercules, underlining the fact that the seizure of the Golden Fleece is a *labor* forced upon him by Pelias (5.486–9). The Tirynthian hero has physically left the scene in the third book and Jason is now given the opportunity to claim his legacy. Indeed, Aeetes promises to give the Fleece to Aeson's son if he agrees to support him in his war against his brother Perses.

34 On the various implications of this simile, see mainly Stover (2012a) 198–206. In particular, Stover argues that astrological references emphasise Jason's role as leader of the Argonauts, given that in the sky the Dog Star appears to be drawing Argo's constellation through the heavens.

35 As Stover (2012a) 202 points out, 'the appearance of the Dog Star is connected with a basic choice: either to avoid its heat and to indulge in peaceful inactivity and *amor*, or to endure its heat and to engage in difficult (martial) labours despite its debilitating effects'.

36 On *servitium amoris*, see e.g. Lyne (1979).

37 See e.g. 5.320, 495–6, 501–2, 508–9, 662–4.

38 See 5.263–71, 519–31.

39 It is interesting to observe what Valerius does with the Homeric background. While Medea reminds us of the well-known Nausicaa (cf. *Odyssey* 6), the same can hardly be said about the two girls' fathers, Aeetes and Alcinous, who are in stark contrast to one another—Alcinous representing the model of the good king and Aeetes the evil tyrant.

During the course of this civil war in Colchis Jason proves his heroism in battle. The war, in which the Argonauts take part as Aeetes' allies,⁴⁰ is narrated in Book 6 and features two major themes: *teichoskopia* and Jason's great *aristeia* (6.575–760).⁴¹ The main model is undoubtedly the Homeric *teichoskopia* in *Iliad* 3.121–394, in which a martial confrontation has been ultimately arranged for amatory purposes, as Menelaus and Paris are competing for Helen's love. In fact, critics have rightly observed that the main purpose of this martial interlude in Colchis, which does not appear in the Argonauts' mythological tradition, is to reinforce Medea's love for Jason and thereby to glorify the Argonaut in his heroic status.

Valerius builds the narrative in such a way that the reader finds himself watching the battle through Medea's gaze (*virginis ora*, 6.718), which is exclusively focused on Jason.⁴² The latter is presented as the greatest among a group of *aristoi*. His prominence and noble character also earn him Juno's praise (6.594). True to the traditional Homeric heroism, Jason in his *aristeia* stands alone against numerous infamous enemies, the most prominent of whom is Colaxes, a son of Jupiter.⁴³ The martial prowess exhibited by Jason renders him *virtute superbum* ('lofty in his *virtus*', 6.735), and his character is glorified in a way as yet unseen, especially in the Apollonian model. Two similes (of Homeric inspiration), one comparing Jason again to the star Sirius (6.607–8) and one comparing him to a lion (6.613–14), show that the *ductor* has now taken the attire of an epic hero.

This display of military ardour, however, is intended to enhance Medea's infatuation with Jason; that is, Valerius is employing heroic epic means in the service of elegiac ends.⁴⁴ As Stover observes, 'in Valerius' poem, *amor* requires *arma*, since the success of the *amor* theme—and by extension the success of the mission in general—depends largely on the seductive allure of Jason's martial exploits'.⁴⁵ The epic is therefore not sidetracked by the poem's love theme, and Medea's first appearance does not seem to affect Jason negatively. Indeed, by the end of the victorious conflict in Colchis, Valerius' effort to render Jason

40 For the reasons for the Argonauts' involvement on Aeetes' side, see e.g. Ferenczi (1995) 152; Fucecchi (2006) 11–15.

41 For *teichoskopia* in Valerius, see in particular Fucecchi (1996) 127–65; (1997); Stover (2012a) 207–18.

42 On the effects of Medea's gaze in this *teichoskopia*, see Lovatt (2006) 67–73; (2013) 236–42.

43 On this episode, recalling Sarpedon's Homeric death, see Fucecchi (1997) 201–16.

44 See Feeney (1991) 328. See also Heerink (forthcoming a) on elegiac influences here and in the closely connected Hylas episode. Cf. also Fucecchi in this volume on 'love and war' in Valerius.

45 Stover (2012a) 215.

'more Virgilian' has transformed the commander of the Argonauts into a more balanced, Aeneas-like, traditional epic hero than his Apollonian counterpart.⁴⁶

The Future is (Un)certain and the End is Always Near: The Last Two Books of the Poem

Although Jason (temporarily) defeats Perses, Aeetes does not grant him the Golden Fleece. On the contrary, the tyrant imposes new challenging tasks upon him. During Jason's audience (7.26–100)⁴⁷ the king reveals his true colours: *alium hic Pelian, alia aequora cerno* ('I see here another Pelias, another sea to cross', 7.92). Jason's reaction reveals heroic features such as righteous anger against injustice (*ira*, 7.82), indignation caused by the king's breach of *fides* (7.91), and consequently *vituperatio* against the tyrant (7.98). Jason declares emphatically that he will face the new trials and leaves the scene. He remains physically absent until the second part of Book 7, but his presence can be felt through the twists and turns of Medea's psychological torments, and her agonising choice between *amor/furor* and *pudor*, which constitutes the central issue of this book.

The scenes imagined and dreamt by Medea portray a much weaker Jason than the hero we knew until then. Jason seems no longer a valorous, proud and confident youth, but a helpless weakling (7.198–9) who is unable to defend himself (7.143), defeated and doomed (7.135, 206–9). This reversal in the perception of the character culminates with the encounter between Medea and Venus, who, disguised as Circe, pretends to have met Jason and to be bringing a message from him (7.259–87). In this message, Jason is presented as imploring Medea (7.269–75), even contemplating suicide (7.286–7), and promising her his eternal gratitude if she would help him (7.284–6).

Critics disagree on the interpretation of this scene. Some perceive it as a manifest sign of Jason's anti-heroism,⁴⁸ while others see it as Medea's subjective interpretation, provoked by Venus in order to arouse enough affection and emotional involvement to induce Medea to help the young man overcome the superhuman tasks allotted to him.⁴⁹ Similarly, Jason's detractors see evidence

46 For Stover ((2012a) 217) Jason's *aristeia* is also a good example of Valerius' response to the iconoclastic poetics of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, in which *virtus* is entirely vitiated by civil war.

47 Ripoll (2003a) 73–4 provides a good analysis of the passage.

48 E.g. Lüthje (1971) 297.

49 See e.g. Cecchin (1984) 310–11.

of hypocrisy and deceitfulness in the actual encounter between Medea and him (7.394–538). In this scene the Argonaut, who now possesses magical philtres, addresses Medea and declares his love for her (saying that he cannot live without her), asks her to marry him and promises eternal faithfulness (with an obvious tragic irony, as the reader already knows the story's outcome). Jason's advocates, on the contrary, explain his attitude as caused by circumstances external to his psychology, as Jason is now under the influence of Medea's magic (7.488–9) and therefore cannot be held responsible for his deeds.⁵⁰

Following this logic, Ripoll sheds light on another interesting aspect of Jason's character: his status as a tragic hero, which at once contrasts with and completes the figure of the epic hero.⁵¹ This seems particularly obvious in the scene where Jason pledges his love to Medea (7.490–508), a passage in which Valerius reconstructs and accentuates the tragic irony already present in Ovid (*Her.* 12.83–8), anticipating through allusions what could happen to Jason should he not keep his promises to the sorceress (7.505–8). Following this scene, the embodiment of *Furor* appears (7.509–10), which is a tragic reinterpretation of the elegiac motif of the vindictive divinity.⁵² The reader knows that Jason will not keep his promise, thereby unleashing a series of disastrous events. Ripoll concludes by observing that if Jason's oath was taken under the influence of Medea's magic (who, in turn, was but a tool of the gods), his moral responsibility is limited; therefore he cannot be blamed for intentional wickedness: he made a mistake, which renders him a truly tragic hero in the Aristotelian sense (*Poet.* 1453a).⁵³ Ultimately, whichever interpretation one prefers, it cannot be denied that the contrasts in these scenes intensify the characteristic *pathos* of Valerius' poetry.⁵⁴

Jason's Trials

Book 7 culminates with Jason's trials.⁵⁵ Medea's intervention here is a firm element of the legend, but the impact of her contribution varies from one author to another. Apollonius enhances the heroic dimension of Jason's trials by means of various references to the *Iliad*, although he makes it clear that

50 See e.g. Adamietz (1976) 99; Cecchin (1984) 312–13.

51 See Ripoll (2003a) 76–9; (2004) 193–4, 199–200.

52 See references in Ripoll (2003a) 77.

53 The influence of tragic models also affects Medea's character here; see e.g. Tschiedel (1991); Ripoll (2004).

54 See also Perutelli (1997) 52–60.

55 On Jason's trials, see Lüthje (1971) 319–23; Stadler (1993) 203–52; Hershkowitz (1998b) 50–7; Ripoll (2003a) 71–3.

the Argonaut's prowess is entirely the result of Medea's magical help. Ovid follows the same approach in his re-elaboration of the myth (see *Met.* 7.100–48; *Her.* 12.93–100). Valerius, for his part, emphasises Jason's moral autonomy and military ardour. As usual, he changes or leaves out passages of Apollonius: Jason arrives first and waits for Aeetes on the battleground (7.542–6), whereas it is the opposite in Apollonius' version (*Ap. Rhod.* 3.1275–7), and Valerius deletes the scenes in which Medea describes the magical rites Jason has to complete in order to become invulnerable (*Ap. Rhod.* 3.1026–50, 1194–1224), thus reducing the importance of magic and enhancing the hero's personal input.

Valerius also develops themes drawn from a long epic tradition, such as the glorification of a lone hero facing a crowd of enemies or monsters (7.559–66, 630–1). For most scholars, Valerius' treatment of Jason's trials once again testifies to his intention to recuperate the main character, whose *virtus* is supported by Medea's temporary help, but does not depend on it.⁵⁶ Others consider Jason's dependence upon Medea's help too negative to be compatible with his heroic status.⁵⁷ At any rate, as Fucecchi correctly points out in this volume, 'Valerius . . . highlights Medea's participation as a direct protagonist in Jason's *aristeia*'. However we evaluate Medea's help in Jason's trials, her contribution turns out to be absolute and decisive during the conquest of the Fleece.

The Fleece: Jason's Last Labor?

Book 8 marks a turning point. In what was most probably intended to be the last book of the poem,⁵⁸ Valerius immediately focuses on Medea, accentuating elements of *pathos* (describing her inner torments) and tragedy (anticipating the fate that awaits her). Allusions to the looming tragedy pervade Book 8 far more than the rest of the poem,⁵⁹ disrupting the epic narrative, just as elegiac elements had done before. This is the atmosphere in which Jason faces his final ordeal, which will enable him at last to obtain the Fleece (8.54–133). The episode is crucial, and provides significant evidence for a comprehensive assessment of the figure of Jason.

Medea first invokes the god Somnus for help, calling on him to direct his might against the dragon (8.68–78). Because of the dragon's resistance, Medea uses everything in her power to overcome the beast (8.79–87). The monster finally collapses, and Medea orders Jason to take the Fleece by climbing the

56 See e.g. Hershkowitz (1998b) 52 and Ripoll (2003a) 73, who argues that Medea intervenes in the battle only after Jason has had the opportunity to prove his *virtus*.

57 E.g. Toohey (1992) 202.

58 On this crucial issue, see most recently Pellucchi (2012) xii–xviii.

59 For a list of the passages, see Pellucchi (2012) xx.

serpent (8.88–111). Jason trusts her word, scales the lofty ash tree (8.112–16) and finally ‘snatches the longed-for prize and the final fruit of toil’ (*corripit optatum decus extremumque laborem*, 8.117). Once they have left the woods, Jason, carrying the Fleece, is compared to Hercules donning the Nemean lion’s skin (8.122–6).

This simile has once more divided critics. For most scholars, the parallel is meant to highlight the figure of Jason, who has now accomplished his heroic path.⁶⁰ For others, the simile underlines the distance between Jason and Hercules, because only the latter can be considered an accomplished hero.⁶¹ A more nuanced reading is given by Fucecchi, who points out the possibility of a subjective perception by Jason in this simile.⁶² For Ripoll the distance between the two heroes is not of a moral nature (as argued, for instance, by Lüthje and Lewis), but of a metaphysical one: Jason becomes a kind of Hercules, but only on a human scale.⁶³

In a recent article I argue that in the episode of the capture of the Fleece the poet exploits the analogies between the myth of the Golden Fleece and the myth of the Golden Apples of the Hesperides, in order to establish a connection between the last actions of Jason in Colchis and the last labour of Hercules.⁶⁴ Through a complex network of allusions involving an astronomical context Valerius composes an elaborate scene in which we see a non-heroic deed in the foreground (Jason’s capture of the Fleece), and in the background a truly heroic labour (Hercules’ fetching of the Golden Apples). As a result, the poet suggests that Hercules will rise towards the stars and will be given a place among the gods, while Jason’s destiny will be less radiant.

Indeed, in the entire episode of the Fleece, Jason accomplishes no real *labor*. Acting as if she were Hercules, Medea does all the work by neutralising the dragon with her supernatural powers; Jason only needs to climb the monster to seize the golden trophy and behave like a triumphant hero. But Jason’s walking on the defeated dragon is just a clumsy terrestrial imitation of what Hercules is doing in the sky: the reference suggested by the poet is the constellation of Engonasin, ‘the Kneeler’, a figure usually identified with Hercules, who was raised to the heavens to commemorate his triumph over the dragon guarding the apples of the Hesperides.⁶⁵

60 See Shey (1968) 234; Hull (1979) 403; Gärtner (1994) 226; Hershkowitz (1998b) 118; Lazzarini (2012) 156.

61 See e.g. Lewis (1984) 95; Feeney (1991) 327 n. 46; Edwards (1999) 162.

62 See Fucecchi (2002) 56–8. His point of view is shared by Pellucchi (2012) 120.

63 See Ripoll (1998) 94.

64 See Castelletti (2012).

65 For all the astrological references, see Castelletti (2012) 143–9.

Hercules achieves immortality, following his father's will, by completing the *labores* that have been either mentioned explicitly throughout the poem or, in the case of the final one, alluded to in the passage that describes the acquisition of the Fleece. But what about Jason? In the scene of his wedding with Medea, Jason is compared not only to Hercules, but also to Mars:

qualis sanguineo victor Gradivus ab Hebro
Idalium furto subit aut dilecta Cythera
seu cum caelestes Alcidae invisere mensas
iam vacat et fessum Iunonia sustinet Hebe.

as Mars when he comes in triumph from bloody Hebrus' stream and steals into Idalium or beloved Cythera, or when Hercules has leisure at last to visit the heavenly banquet, and Hebe, child of Juno, sustains him exhausted.

(8.228–31)

Involving the paradigmatic 'choice of Hercules' between *virtus* and *voluptas*, this simile suggests that making the right choice (like Valerius' Hercules) leads to *apotheosis*, while making the wrong one (like Mars, who is here portrayed as an *adulter*,⁶⁶ foreshadowing Jason's future behaviour in Corinth)⁶⁷ leads to suffering and tragedy.⁶⁸

The Homebound Journey

After the capture of the Fleece, the narrative focuses on the homebound journey, but Valerius, unlike Apollonius, keeps referring to events that will happen after the return to Thessaly, endowing the figure of Jason with an increasing number of features foreshadowing the myth's tragic tradition. External conflicts (against the Colchians) are followed by internecine strife, which threatens to undermine Jason's relationship not only with Medea, but also with the other Argonauts, as both his *auctoritas* and his *virtus* are questioned.

66 A similar interpretation is provided by Gärtner (1994) 228 and Lazzarini (2012) 228. Ripoll (1998) 174 argues against a moral interpretation of *furto* (229) as negatively referring to adultery.

67 Note that Jason is already called an *adulter* by Styrrus (to whom Medea was betrothed) at 8.337–8.

68 For a full discussion on this simile, the proverbial choice of Hercules (also suggested in 8.64–7) and the issue of the relationship between Hercules and Jason, see Castelletti (2012) 155–62.

When the Colchian pursuers reach Peuce and interrupt Jason and Medea's wedding celebration there, which is full of dark foreboding (8.217–58),⁶⁹ Styrrus, Medea's betrothed, bitterly reproaches Jason (8.335–55), questioning his force and valour. He accuses him of owing his achievements more to the girl's magic (8.342) than to his own manliness, calling him *Haemonius adulter* ('a Haemonian adulterer', 8.338) and *semivir Achivus* ('an Achaean eunuch', 8.347). Another significant scene is the one where Jason's comrades try to convince him to give up Medea, for the sake of a truce with the Colchians (8.385–404).

Jason's internal conflict between his duties of a leader and those of a husband (undoubtedly inspired by Virgil's Aeneas and Dido) foreshadows the tragic outcome of their relationship. The poem breaks off at 8.467, when Jason is about to answer Medea's tirade. Both figures can be perceived as victims of a tragic process, and this enhances the *pathos* in the narrative. The *imprudencia* Jason had already displayed when 'kidnapping' Acastus in Book 1 resurfaces in Book 8 with the 'abduction' of Medea, the consequences of which will also be catastrophic.⁷⁰ Although we do not know how Valerius intended his *Argonautica* to end, it is attractive and plausible to suppose that the killing of Absyrtus (most likely by Jason) was the poem's final episode.⁷¹ At any rate, in this last book Jason seems very different from the *dux* of the first part of the poem, and he may be perceived more as a tragic hero than as an accomplished epic one.

Conclusion

A comprehensive assessment of the figure of Jason cannot overlook the evolution of his character, which is closely connected with the structure of the poem. As observed by Zissos, the epic is divided into two 'thematically and teleologically disconnected halves. The first half of the epic takes as its overarching theme the opening of the seas (the Argonauts' voyage involves a technological conquest as part of a broader civilizing mission) and projects

69 See in particular Mopsus' visions at 8.247–51.

70 Pellucchi ((2012) lii–liii), in the wake of Scaffai ((1986a) 248), thinks that *imprudencia* is Jason's original sin, which prevents his epic-heroic fulfilment and condemns him to a tragic fate.

71 Cf. Hershkowitz (1998b) 9; Nesselrath (1998); Pellucchi (2012) xvii. Ripoll ((2008) 180–2) suggests a final duel opposing Jason and Absyrtus on the Aeneas–Turnus Virgilian model. See also Zissos in this volume on the supplement of Pio, who indeed lets Book 8 end with Jason's killing of Absyrtus.

a generally positive sense of the future. The second half features internecine strife, destructive sexual passion, and familial betrayal, and insistently adumbrates a tragic conclusion to the Argonauts' voyage.⁷²

Therefore, utterly positive or negative interpretations of Jason's character and his heroic qualities need to be nuanced. Indeed, to condemn or absolve the figure of Jason, one must ignore certain passages of the poem or accentuate others to corroborate one's opinion. But Jason is neither completely innocent nor entirely guilty, just as he is neither an example of pure heroism nor an incarnation of wickedness. His character reflects the overall evolution of the poem. Embodying the antithesis between epic exaltation and tragic pessimism, Jason demonstrates the antinomies embedded in Valerius' narrative.⁷³ In the first part of the poem, Valerius sets out to rehabilitate Jason's heroism, correcting the negative traits of his *amechanos* Apollonian counterpart and endowing him with Virgilian features which make him more like Aeneas.

But Jason is not a second Aeneas.⁷⁴ Although he is undoubtedly the *ductor* of the expedition, he is not, unlike Virgil's hero, the depositary of a collective fate which he must see accomplished as part of a historic duty towards both his lineage of ancestors and his descendants, but the representative of an epic humanity whose values of physical courage and moral energy he must preserve.⁷⁵ The characteristic *pietas* of Aeneas also has no equivalent in Valerius' hero. The most obvious reason is that Jason, unlike Aeneas, is not the son of a goddess and does not entertain the close relationship with the divine that is the privilege of the Trojan prince. Jason is but a man, with the means of action and the knowledge of an ordinary human being. His *virtus* is the only way for him to prove that he belongs to the community of heroes, but he is denied a privileged understanding of fate. Hercules, son of Jupiter, takes his orders directly from Iris and waits confidently for his apotheosis; Jason, for his part, must content himself with obscure oracles and vague intuitions,⁷⁶ and his situation is emblematic of mankind's fate.⁷⁷

72 Zissos (2004d) 311.

73 See Adamietz (1976) *passim*; Ripoll (2003a) 78.

74 Ferenczi's interpretation ((1991) 151) that Jason is not a founder, but a destroyer, is perhaps too harsh.

75 Ripoll (1998) 27.

76 On Jason's perception of divine plans, see Groß (2003) 93–108, 175–83, 239–49; Manuwald (2009) 603–4.

77 See Ripoll (1998) 274.

Hercules entirely accomplishes the will Jupiter expressed in the *Weltenplan* (1.531–67).⁷⁸ His heroic journey leads gradually to his apotheosis, which requires a series of exploits (such as the liberation of Hesione in 2.451–549 and of Prometheus in 5.154–76), proving that he is an instrument of the gods' will, as well as being a divinity himself.⁷⁹ Hercules therefore provides an example for Jason. At certain points, they tread a parallel path, although their destinies turn out quite differently. Jason undoubtedly aspires to an ideal of epic heroism, but he is not quite successful in accomplishing it.

However, does Valerius hold him personally responsible? Jason's failure is due not to his lack of willpower⁸⁰ but to unfortunate circumstances, one of which is the weight of (a negative) mythological tradition, which is constantly foreshadowed in the poem. Reaching the stars is possible for the sons of Jupiter, as is confirmed by the catasterism of Pollux, who heroically fought Amycus (4.187–343).⁸¹ But are the ordinary sons of humans inexorably doomed to fail? They can and must follow positive models, and Jason demonstrates he is willing to do so in long parts of the poem. Besides, on two occasions, his quest for glory is chiefly triggered by an encounter with tyranny. Jason does not choose to fight the tyrant and to spark a civil revolt, but he accepts the tasks that are imposed upon him by Pelias and Aeetes, in a desire for glory.

In this respect, Jason's issues could be seen as a reflection of the poet's actual situation. Valerius Flaccus was a member of the aristocracy that had finally come to terms with the inevitability of the imperial regime by the time the Flavians had taken power.⁸² His poem stands halfway between the *Aeneid's* justification of the Principate and Lucan's adamant refusal of it in his *Bellum Civile*. In his quest for heroic glory, Valerius' Jason is frustrated by tyranny. Thereby the Latin poet projects the incompatibility between Roman aristocratic ambition and desire for public distinction, on the one hand, and the new political realities of the Principate, on the other.⁸³ Despite the tragic prospects heralded at the end of the poem, Valerius may not have been entirely pessimistic regarding the future.⁸⁴ In fact, by establishing a direct connection between

78 *tendite in astra viri* ('Strive for the stars, heroes', 1.563). In Jupiter's (Roman) Stoic vision of heroism it is only through real struggles and deeds that one can reach the glory of the sky.

79 On the process of Hercules' deification in Valerius, see Ripoll (1998) 88–112; Castelletti (2012) 155–60.

80 According to Ferenczi (1995) 155, *virtus* is undermined by the circumstances.

81 On Pollux' apotheosis, see Ripoll (1998) 73–9.

82 Valerius wrote his poem under the Flavian dynasty. On the issue of the date of composition, see most recently Stover (2012a) 7–26, who argues for a period between 70 and 79 CE.

83 See Zissos (2003) 670; Pellucchi (2012) lvi.

84 On Valerius' pessimistic vision, see Hull (1979) 406–8.

the events occurring in Colchis and the Trojan War—through the ‘abduction’ of Medea, which prefigures the kidnapping of Helen (see 8.395–9)⁸⁵—the Argonauts’ expedition bears not only the seeds of a tragedy, but also the premises of a new epic,⁸⁶ opening perhaps a small ray of hope that a different world might be possible.⁸⁷ At any rate, even if the stars are accessible only for a few chosen ones, the fame granted by poetry has the means to reach the sky, and to stay there.

85 On the Trojan War in the *Argonautica*, see Barnes (1981); Pellucchi (2012) xxv–vi. See also Davis and Fucecchi in this volume.

86 See Ripoll (1998) 34.

87 As argued by Pellucchi (2012) lvii.

Medea: From Epic to Tragedy

Peter J. Davis

Introduction

The history of Medea's place in Greco-Roman literature is long and complex. For Valerius' Flavian readers that history extended back some eight centuries and included works in two languages and a multiplicity of genres: epic and tragedy, lyric and elegy.¹ Complex too is Medea's biography, for her roles include Jason's virgin-lover in Colchis, murderous wife in Iolcus, abandoned mother in Corinth, poisonous stepmother in Athens, potential filicide in Colchis and even wife of Achilles in the underworld. But of these six episodes two stand out: the epic story of the princess who helps the foreign hero and the tragic tale of the woman who kills her sons.²

Like Apollonius before him, Valerius faced the problem of reconciling these two Medeas.³ Given that Apollonius is typically focused on the past and on the origins of present names and practices (aetiology being one of the poem's obsessions) and that Valerius is characteristically concerned with origins and the future (prolepsis being the poem's defining trope), it is not surprising that the two poets handle this difficulty in different ways.

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- 1 E.g. epic: Eumelus' *Corinthiaca* (eighth century BCE), Apollonius' *Argonautica*, Varro's *Argonautae*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 7; tragedy: Euripides' *Peliades*, *Medea* and *Aegeus*, Ennius' *Medea Exul*, Pacuvius' *Medus*, Accius' *Medea sive Argonautae*, Ovid's *Medea*, Seneca's *Medea*; lyric poetry: Pindar's fourth *Pythian*; elegy: Ovid's *Heroides* 12.
 - 2 It is noteworthy that in the literature of which we have knowledge the first part of Medea's story is related only by epic poets (Apollonius, Varro, Ovid, Valerius) and that the story of Jason's betrayal and the murder of the children is confined to tragedy (Euripides, Ennius, Ovid, Seneca).
 - 3 For this problem, which also faced Ovid, see Kenney (2008) esp. 369 (on *Metamorphoses*) and Davis (2012) on *Heroides*.

fratre tamen conante sequi. mox stare paventes
 viderat intenta pueros nece seque trementem
 spargere caede manus et lumina rumpere fletu.⁷ 340

She dreamed that she was leaving chaste Hecate's grove in fear, and as she approached her pious father's face, that the sea stood high between them; that she was stunned by the vast surrounding deep, while her brother still tried to follow. Soon she saw boys standing in fear of imminent death and herself trembling as she spattered her hands with slaughter, her eyes bursting with tears.

(5.335–40)

The dreams are strikingly different. First, Apollonius' narrator tells us that Medea's dream is 'deceptive' (ἡπεροπῆς, 3.617). And indeed it is, for it mingles truth and falsehood. The Roman Medea's dream, on the other hand, is entirely veridical. Second, while the Apollonian Medea's dream looks to the future, it looks no further than the events of Book 4. The Roman Medea's dream, by contrast, looks forward not only to the poem's final book but also to events outside the poem's narrative limits, events represented in the Medea-tragedies of Euripides, Seneca and others.

But this is not all. Medea's dream is only the first intimation in the Colchian books that the relationship of Jason and Medea will prove disastrous, for in Book 5 Valerius uses ekphrasis to foreshadow the tragic events at Corinth (5.442–54),⁸ while in Book 8 he uses wedding omens to suggest calamity:⁹

sed neque se pingues tum candida flamma per auras
 explicuit nec tura videt concordia Mopsus
 promissam nec stare fidem, breve tempus amorum.
 odit utrumque simul, simul et miseratur utrumque 250
 et tibi tum nullos optavit, barbara, natos.

But then no bright flame unfolded through the rich odours and Mopsus sees neither concordant incense nor promised loyalty enduring, only a brief period of love. He hates each of them at the same time, at the same time pities each and then wished you no sons, barbarian woman.

(8.247–51)

7 For the text of Valerius I use Liberman (1997, 2002). All translations are my own.

8 For discussion of the temple images, see Manuwald (1998) and Davis (2010) 3–5.

9 For discussion of other aspects of the wedding, see Davis (2010) 7–9.

The meaning of the omens is plain. As the Senecan Tiresias' questions imply (*Oed.* 309–13), a flame which unfolds clear and bright to heaven portends good, while a smoky flame which hugs the ground bodes ill.¹⁰ While the precise meaning of 'concordant incense' is not obvious,¹¹ its augural significance is evident both from the choice of epithet (marriages require 'concord')¹² and from the line that follows: this marriage will not last. Most explicit of all is Mopsus' perhaps unspoken prayer that Medea not have children. Note too that this is the second time that Medea has been addressed as *barbara*. At 8.148 Medea's mother addresses her daughter as *barbara* to underline her future isolation among the Greeks. On this occasion, however, the term is used with its full emotive and evaluative force: Medea's behaviour will be barbaric.

But the fact that Mopsus is responsible for the poem's final divination should remind us that Mopsus is also the author of the poem's first prophecy and that his prophecy concluded with a premonition of Jason's Corinthian marriage:

quaenam aligeris secatur anguibus auras
caede madens? quos ense ferit? miser, eripe parvos,
Aesonide. cerno et thalamos ardere iugales.

What woman, drenched with slaughter, cuts through the air on winged serpents? Whom does she strike with the sword? Poor Jason, rescue your little ones. And I see a wedding chamber burning.

(1.224–6)

Allusion to the Ovidian and Senecan accounts of the bloody events at Corinth is unmistakable.¹³

10 Note the similarity of language: both Seneca and Valerius speak of the flame unfolding (*explicuit*, *Oed.* 311, 8.248) and both speak of clarity and brightness (*clarus*, *nitidus*, *Oed.* 309, *candida*, 8.247).

11 For discussion of possible meanings, see Spaltenstein (2005) 440.

12 For the goddess Concordia as a presence at weddings, see Hersch (2010) 262.

13 The Valerian Mopsus' prophecy is closer to Ovid and Seneca than to Euripides. The Euripidean Medea destroys the princess and Creon by fire (1184–1203) and escapes by means of Helios' horse-drawn chariot (1321; for the horses, cf. Eur. *El.* 866, *Ion* 41, 1148–9, *Phaeth.* 2–3). In Ovid (*Met.* 7.395, 398) and Seneca (*Med.* 886, 1023), by contrast, the fire destroys the palace as well as the royal family, while Medea escapes on a chariot drawn by snakes. Note that there is no persuasive evidence for the common claim that the Euripidean Medea escapes in a serpent-chariot: (1) there is no reference to serpents at the end of the play; (2) Schmidt ((1992) 396) points out in her *LIMC* entry 'Medeia' that the earliest representations (from southern Italy, c. 400 BCE) of Medea escaping in

Medea and the Future: Troy

Elsewhere in the first half of the poem foreshadowing of the events of Books 7 and 8 is frequent. Thus Jupiter speaks of punishment for the 'impious maid' and vengeance for 'Aeetes' sorrows' (4.13–14), while Orpheus' story of Io (4.344–421) prefigures Medea's plight exactly.¹⁴ But most important of all are the much-discussed paintings on the Argo's hull.¹⁵ One thing is clear: as Köstlin argued in 1889,¹⁶ the images foreshadow the destinies of Jason and Medea. In the case of the first picture, the only one that I propose to consider, the connection is secured by the close similarities between the descriptions of Thetis and Medea just before their weddings.¹⁷

How then does the wedding of Peleus and Thetis depicted on the Argo prefigure that of Jason and Medea in Book 8? That the Flavian poet alludes to Catullus 64 is clear, because, as Zissos points out,¹⁸ Valerius' manner of transition from one side of the Argo to the other (*parte alia... Iaccho*, 'elsewhere... with Iacchus', 1.140), recalls with some precision Catullus' device for shifting his focus from Ariadne's plight to Bacchus' arrival (*at parte ex alia... Iacchus*, 'but elsewhere Iacchus', 64.251). But there is also explicit reference to *Metamorphoses* 11, with Thetis' disappointment over Achilles' inferior status (*nec Iove maiorem nasci suspirat Achillen*, 'and she sighs that Achilles is not born greater than Jove', 1.133) recalling the reason for the Ovidian Jupiter's avoidance of Thetis: *ne quicquam mundus Iove maius haberet*, 'lest the world hold anything greater than Jove', 11.224).

Thus it is not surprising that Valerius' ekphrasis positions itself between these two accounts. While in Catullus Thetis is said not to despise marriage to a mortal (64.20) and to have a harmonious relationship with Peleus (64.334–6), in Ovid the goddess is not so much married as raped, with the poet employing one of his formulas for sexual violence (*vim parat*, 'he prepares force', 11.240)

a serpent-chariot are probably not connected with Euripides' text; (3) the hypothesis and scholia which refer to serpents are centuries later than the first production (431 BCE). Mastronarde (2002) 377–8 and Boyle (2012) 29 n. 18 are appropriately sceptical.

14 For this, see Davis (2009).

15 For the secondary literature, see Zissos (2008) 152–4; Galli (2007) 110–19.

16 Köstlin (1889) 652–3.

17 Thetis: *sedet deiecta in lumina palla* ('she sits with her cloak drawn down over her eyes', 1.132); Medea: *deiecta residens in lumina palla* ('sitting with her cloak drawn down over her eyes', 8.204).

18 Zissos (2008) 162.

to describe their first encounter.¹⁹ Indeed there is no actual wedding: Thetis is simply overwhelmed and impregnated (11.263–5). In Valerius Thetis is represented as travelling to a wedding, but one that she does not want (*insperatos... | Peleos in thalamos vehitur Thetis*, ‘Thetis is carried to an unwanted marriage with Peleus’, 1.130–1).²⁰

If we turn to the union of Jason and Medea, we find a similar situation. For some of the poem’s characters Medea is raped. Thus Jupiter speaks of her as ‘a raped virgin’ (*virgine rapta*, 1.547), while Hecate foresees Medea acting not of her own accord (*haud sponte*, 6.498) and predicts that Jason will understand her grief at her servant’s rape (*raptu famulae*, 6.502). Note too that Medea’s family and Jason’s men adopt the same perspective as these gods, for Absyrtus likens Jason to the rapist Jupiter (*raptor | Iuppiter*, 8.265–6) and the Argonauts speak of ‘stolen marriage’ (*raptisque... | coniugiis*, 8.392–3). On the other hand, if Liberman’s emendation is correct, then Medea is ‘not unwilling’ (*non invita*, 6.499). This too finds narrative support, for we are told of Medea’s frenzy (*furores*, 6.667), of her unrequited passion (*inexpletis... curis*, 6.759) and of her suffering cruel love (*saevus amor*, 7.307): in short Medea is a lover.²¹ She is, moreover, as explicit on the subject of choice as her Ovidian predecessor: *vota sequor* (‘I pursue my own desires’, 8.48; cf. *deteriora sequor*, ‘I pursue the worse’, *Met.* 7.21). If Valerius’ Thetis, positioned as she is between contradictory accounts, can be seen as a bearer of opposite properties, so too is his Medea, for, depending on the speaker’s perspective, she is and is not raped.

But this image on the Argo does more than foreshadow events later in the poem, for it points to larger issues. As Barnes and others have observed,²² there are causal connections that link the two stories. Argo’s is the first sea voyage and Jason’s journey to Colchis is a but-for cause of the Greek expedition against Troy. Furthermore, as is clear from Jupiter’s prophecy (1.546–51), Valerius adopts the pattern of causality outlined in the opening chapters of Herodotus: the seizure of Medea by Jason is to be repaid by Paris’ theft of Helen.

These causal connections between the stories of Medea and Thetis are reinforced by the fact that the first set of images foreshadows not only the birth of Achilles, but specific events in Greco-Trojan history. Consider, for example, the names of the Nereids who accompany Thetis to the wedding: Panope,

19 Cf. *Met.* 2.576 (Neptune and Coronis), 5.288 (Pyreneus and the Muses), 14.770 (Vertumnus and Pomona); *Fast.* 2.613 (Mercury and Lara).

20 The reading *insperatos* (Gronovius) is also adopted by Spaltenstein (2002), Galli (2007) and Zissos (2008).

21 It is notable that *amans* is used only of Medea (7.3, 23, 107, 412, 510; 8.31).

22 Barnes (1981). See also Zissos (2008) xl–xlii.

Doto and Galatea. These names occur together in earlier literature only in the *Iliad* and *Theogony*. In Hesiod they appear in a bare genealogical list, a catalogue of Nereus' daughters (248, 250). In Homer too the names occur in a list, but one which has a narrative context, a key moment in the epic, the point at which Achilles learns of Patroclus' death, the point at which his extravagant grief begins. The significance of the moment is underlined by the fact that Thetis too joins in the mourning, accompanied by, among others, Panope, Doto and Galatea (*Il.* 18.43, 45). For Valerius, naming the members of Thetis' wedding escort is a way of foreshadowing the immense suffering and sorrow that will result from the marriage of Peleus and Thetis: the members of Thetis' bridal party will become her fellow mourners. So too is the naming of Thetis' mode of transport. Commentators point out that the phrase 'Tyrrhenian fish' (*Tyrrheni...piscis*, 1.130) occurs in earlier literature only at Seneca, *Agamemnon* 451 (*Tyrrhenus...piscis*), but ignore the context in which it appears. These frolicking 'fish' constitute the prelude to Eurybates' description of the great storm that will devastate the Greek fleet as it returns from Troy.

But this is not Medea's only connection with the Trojan War, for Valerius also links Medea and Jason with Helen and Paris. Note, for example, that the Argonauts, taking their cue from Mopsus, suggest that Medea anticipates Helen when they beg Jason not to allow Medea to become the 'first Fury to join Europe and Asia in war' (*Europam atque Asiam prima haec committat Erinys*, 8.396), a sentiment which recalls the Virgilian Aeneas' description of Helen as 'a Fury shared by Troy and her own country' (*Troiae et patriae communis Erinys*, *Aen.* 2.573),²³ and that they see Jason as foreshadowing 'another rapist' (*alius...raptor*, 8.399), who will cause a 'grim conflagration'. But most telling of all is Medea's prefiguring/re-enactment of Helen's role in *Iliad* 3 when she views foreign troops from the city's wall. While Helen is deceived by Iris, Hera's agent, disguised as her sister-in-law Laodice, Medea is misled by Juno herself masquerading as her actual sister Chalciope. In both cases the goddess's goal is erotic, for Iris casts upon Helen 'sweet desire' for her former husband (3.139–40), while Juno aims to make Medea fall in love with Jason. And the sequel to each teichoscopy is similar, for *Iliad* 3 closes with Aphrodite persuading Helen to make love to Paris, while the next book of the *Argonautica* presents Venus as successfully inducing sexual passion in Medea. Thus the Valerian Medea foreshadows both of the female agents primarily responsible for the Trojan War: Thetis, mother of Achilles, and Helen, wife of both Paris and Menelaus.

I claimed earlier that prolepsis is Valerius' characteristic trope. In the first half of the *Argonautica* the poet exploits foreshadowing of events that occur

23 As Barnes (1981) 369 points out.

in later books both as a device for tightening the poem's narrative structure and as a means of reminding the reader of one of the most important effects of Argo's voyage: the bringing of Medea to Greece. In both halves of the poem prolepsis is used to remind the reader of the whole of Medea's story, to remind us that this tale of love and adventure has catastrophic consequences. But most importantly of all, Valerius employs prolepsis in order to underline Medea's role in the divine plan for world history, including the Trojan War,²⁴ and in the poem's ideological structure.

Compelling Medea

I would like to turn now to the means that the gods employ to achieve Medea's collaboration in the accomplishment of their world-historical objectives. One of the features that distinguishes Valerius' *Argonautica* from that of Apollonius is the greater prominence given to the gods in the Roman poem. While it cannot be said that the gods are absent from the first half of the Greek poem, the fact is that the first Olympian set piece does not occur until the beginning of Book 3. Valerius, by contrast, places a major scene in Book 1 in which the gods debate whether they should support Argo's voyage and in which Jupiter, in Virgilian fashion, expounds his plan for human history (1.498–573). Valerius then employs divine machinery prominently in each of the subsequent books. This suggests that the Flavian poet assigns greater agency to the gods than Apollonius does.

Let's begin by comparing the roles of Aphrodite/Venus in the poems' most celebrated books, the books in which Jason, with Medea's aid, tames Aeetes' bulls, sows the Cadmean seeds and defeats the earth-born men. Apollonius' third book begins with Hera and Athena approaching Aphrodite, urging her to induce Medea to love Jason and offer him advice (3.6–110). In similar fashion, Valerius' Juno approaches Venus in Book 7, urging her to encourage Medea to love Jason, protect him, and enchant the snake that guards the Golden Fleece (7.153–70).

While Hera/Juno proves persuasive in both poems, the results are very different, for Aphrodite decides to employ Eros, while Venus takes on the task herself. Thus Apollonius gives us two scenes, one in which naughty Eros has to be bribed to obey his mother (3.113–66) and another briefer scene (3.275–303) in which Eros instantly inflames Medea's heart with 'destructive love' (ὀλὸς ἐρως, 3.297). In place of these two relatively brief episodes Valerius gives us

24 For the 'world plan', see Wacht (1991a); Manuwald (1999) 130–76.

nearly 200 lines in which Venus works hard to enforce her will upon a reluctant Medea (7.210–399).

Medea and her struggle are the primary focus of the first half of Book 7, a fact underlined by Valerius' emphatic use of apostrophe in the opening lines:

Te quoque Thessalico iam serus ab hospite vesper
dividit et iam te tua gaudia, virgo, relinquunt
noxque ruit soli veniens non mitis amanti.

You too late evening now separates from the Thessalian guest and now
your joys abandon you, maiden, and night comes on apace, unkind only
to a lover.

(7.1–3)

Picking up from the final lines of Book 6, lines that suggest Medea's growing passion,²⁵ the narrator opens Book 7 with the word *te* ('you'), reinforcing the use of the second person in the second line by repetition (*te*, *tua*, 'you, your'), addressing Medea directly as *virgo* ('maiden') and at the very least implying that she is in love (*amanti*, 'lover').

This focus is strengthened further in the three monologues that Valerius assigns to Medea before the arrival of Venus. The first (7.9–20) underlines Medea's naivety (she fails to recognise love's symptoms) and her innocence (she concludes with a wish that Jason leave Colchis). It also highlights the paradoxical nature of her situation, for unlike the Ovidian Medea who complains that a strange force drags her against her will (*sed trahit invitam nova vis*, *Met.* 7.19), the Valerian Medea claims that she is dragged willingly: *ipsa volens... trahor* (7.10).²⁶ The second (7.128–40) occurs after Aeetes has rejected Jason's request for the Fleece and is embedded in the narrator's account of Medea's psychological condition (101–52). While the soliloquy primarily expresses Medea's hope for Jason's safe return to Greece, the surrounding narrative emphasises her regret at Jason's apparent departure and suggests her perplexity (she seeks in turn the company of the stranger, her sister and her parents (115–23)) and

25 E.g. *aegra* ('sick', 'distressed', 6.753); *inexpletis... curis* ('her cares not satisfied', 6.759). Love as a disease is a particularly common trope; *cura* is frequent in erotic contexts. Fucecchi (1997) 251 notes that after Ennius' *Medea*, *aeger* became almost Medea's characteristic epithet (*Medea animo aegro amore saevo saucia*, 'Medea sick at heart, wounded by savage love', Jocelyn (1967) 216); also noted by Perutelli (1997) 162. Note too the simile comparing Medea to a Bacchant at 6.755–7.

26 For this allusion, see Auhagen (2004) 96–7.

irrationality (she is compared to the Fury-hounded Orestes (147–52)). The third monologue (7.198–209), placed between Venus' encounter with Juno on Olympus and her arrival in Medea's bedroom, effectively continues the second, for it too expresses concern for Jason's safety, adding the wish that Medea might tend the hero's tomb.

One of the most striking aspects of Medea's encounter with Venus is the strength of her resistance to the goddess's attempts to manipulate her emotions. Disguised as Circe and playing the role of Anna in *Aeneid* 4, Venus attempts to break down Medea's resistance by advancing a quasi-Stoic cosmopolitan view of the world²⁷ and by contrasting her own Italian home and suitable marriage with Medea's disagreeable homeland (the place has fire-breathing bulls!)²⁸ and likely marriage to a local savage (7.223–36). Unlike Dido, however, Medea instantly rejects her relative's advice (*spernere*, 7.237), refuses to be cast in the role of victim (*non . . . cogar*, 'I will not be forced', 7.238–9) and insists that what she needs is 'peace' (*quies*, 244). She concludes with words both prophetic and perceptive:

tristes thalamos infestaque cerno
omnia, vipereos ipsi tibi surgere crines.

I see a grim marriage and a world full of danger, and your hair rising like
vipers.

(7.249–50)

Whether Medea foresees her own marriage to Jason or Jason's Corinthian wedding hardly matters: in either case the marriage is truly 'grim'. But most telling of all is Medea's perception of Venus' resemblance to a Fury, for in Valerius Flaccus, as Philip Hardie points out, 'the workings of Venus . . . and of the Furies are practically indistinguishable'.²⁹

This resistance is all the more remarkable in that as soon as Medea's speech is complete Valerius makes plain that the girl is already gripped by *furor*, employing as he does the same images of bones and fire (*ossibus . . . ignem*, 253) that Virgil had used of Dido and Amata when in the power of disguised

27 For this, see Preiswerk (1934) 438 (who cites Sen. *De Otio* 4.1, *Ad Marciam* 18.1, *De Vita Beata* 20.5, *De Ira* 2.31.7); Perutelli (1997) 277–8; and Elm von der Osten (2007) 118. Preiswerk (1934) 437 also notes connections with speeches of Jason and Jupiter in Book 1.

28 For the contrast between Italy and Colchis, see Virg. *G.* 2.140–1.

29 Hardie (1989) 6. See also Hershkowitz (1998b) 180; Elm von der Osten (2007) 31–3 (Venus as Fury in the Lemnian episode), 122–3 (Venus as Fury in this episode).

divinities (*ossibus implicet ignem*, *Aen.* 1.660; *ossibus implicat ignem*, 7.355; 'entwines bones with fire'). Even so, Medea resists the forces to which Dido and Amata succumbed. Still more remarkable is the fact that Medea resists Venus' application of 'maddening kisses' (*furialia* . . . | *oscula*, 254–5), her infusion of 'mingled love and hate' (255) and her romantic story of a lover who needs her aid (257–83). To all this pressure Medea's response is modesty and anger: *tanta pudor aestuat ira* ('her modesty burns with such great anger', 294). In the end the goddess has to compel Medea to submit: *illa sequi iubet* ('she orders her to follow', 300).

And that Medea does act under compulsion is made clear from the simile that follows, for Medea under Venus' control is likened to Pentheus in the power of Bacchus:

saevus Echionia ceu Penthea Bacchus in aula
deserit innexis per roscida cornua vittis,
cum tenet ille deum, pudibundaque tegmina matris
tympanaque et mollem subito miser accipit hastam.

Just as cruel Bacchus, garlands bound on his dew-drenched horns, abandons Pentheus in Echion's palace, when, poor wretch, he contains the god and suddenly accepts his mother's shaming clothes, drums and effeminate spear.

(7.301–4)

Perhaps the first thing to note about this simile is that Medea, as scholars have pointed out,³⁰ was implicitly likened to Pentheus when she perceived Venus as a Fury (7.249–50), for Pentheus also unwittingly recognised a god's bestial nature (Eur. *Bacch.* 920–2). Here the resemblance is made explicit, with Valerius drawing material from the same Euripidean episode, the episode in which Pentheus wears clothes just like his mother's (917) and holds the thyrsus (941–2). Note too that Dionysus set out the implications of Pentheus' cross-dressing at the end of the previous episode:

ὥς φρονῶν μὲν εἶ
οὐ μὴ θελήσῃ θήλυον ἐνδύναϊ στολήν,
ἔξω δ' ἐλαύνων τοῦ φρονεῖν ἐνδύσεται.

30 E.g. Gärtner (1994) 196; Hershkowitz (1998b) 262; Elm von der Osten (2007) 122.

Sane he will not be willing to put on women's clothing, but driving outside his wits he will put them on.

(Eur. *Bacch.* 851–3)

In *Bacchae* Pentheus' wearing of female costume implies loss of self-control and powerlessness in the god's hands. And that same implication holds in Valerius, for shortly after the Pentheus simile Medea is described as feeling that 'she is overwhelmed by some god' (*se numine vinci*, 323) and that 'modesty's previous advice had been cut away' (*abscisum quicquid pudor ante monebat*, 324). So great is Venus' power that Zissos rightly argues that 'left to her own devices, Medea would not have forsaken father and fatherland for Jason'.³¹

Venus' control over Medea is made even clearer if we compare Valerius' treatment of Medea's meeting with Jason with that of Apollonius. The Greek poet gives us separate descriptions of the arrival of Medea and Jason at Hecate's shrine. First he describes Medea, accompanied by two servants, mounting a wagon, holding a whip, driving through the city and persuading her companions to stand aside so that she can meet Jason on her own (3.869–911). Next he depicts Jason making his way accompanied by Argus and Mopsus, until a crow sent by Hera suggests to Mopsus that Jason should proceed alone (3.913–46). If we turn to Valerius, we find that the gods are far more active, for Venus leads Medea by the hand (*dat dextram*, 372) to the shrine, while Jason is accompanied by Iris (398). And in place of Apollonius' confident Medea asserting her own authority, Valerius gives us a troubled girl, one whose anxieties and fears are first soothed by Venus (373–4) and then simply rebuffed (388). Note too the dependence implied by the simile in which Venus is likened to a mother bird and Medea to her trembling brood learning to fly (375–9), an implication strengthened by allusion to Daedalus and Icarus in *Metamorphoses* 8.³²

It is also important to note that two similes in Book 8, both drawn from Bacchic legend, suggest that Medea remains under divine control. First, when fleeing her father's home, Medea is likened to Ino, driven mad by Juno, at the moment when she leaps into the sea holding her infant son, Palaemon:

inde velut torto Furiarum erecta flagella
prosilit, attonito qualis pede prosilit Ino

³¹ Zissos (2012) 105.

³² Commentators (e.g. Langen (1896); Perutelli (1997); Taliercio (1992); Stadler (1993)) point out that the simile's model is Ov. *Met.* 8.213–15. For detailed discussion of the implications of this simile, see Gärtner (1994) 199–202. For discussion of the ideological implications of the Daedalus-Icarus simile at 1.704–8, see Davis (2010) n. 14.

in freta nec parvi meminit conterrita nati
quem tenet; extremo coniunx furit inritus Isthmo.

Then as if excited by the Furies' twisted lash she rushes out, just as Ino with stunned step rushes out into the sea and, terrified, does not recall the infant son she holds; her husband rages at the Isthmus' edge, uselessly.

(8.20–3)

There are several points of connection between Ino and Medea. First, we might see Ino's attempted sacrifice of her stepchildren, Phrixus and Helle (1.277–80, 5.188), as foreshadowing Medea's killing of her children. Second, as Gärtner points out,³³ we might also see Ino and her husband Athamas as pre-figuring Medea and Jason as parents who are responsible for their children's deaths. Third, and most important in this context, Ino has been maddened by Tisiphone at Juno's command,³⁴ just as Medea has been infected with sexual passion by Fury-like Venus at Juno's request. So too with the simile at 8.446–8 in which Medea is likened to a maenad under Bacchus' control,³⁵ for both remind us of the power of the gods over Medea.

Medea's Powers

But if Valerius presents Medea as a girl controlled by the gods, he also presents her as the powerful woman that the narrator foreshadowed in Book 6, for in the second half of Book 7 she truly is the one 'who inspires awe with her magic powers and virginity' (*opibus magicis et virginitate tremendam*, 6.449).³⁶ Comparison with Apollonius is helpful here. After the Hellenistic Jason and Medea separate (3.1147), Medea has little role to play: Jason follows Medea's instructions in arming himself for the contest (1246) and recalls Medea's advice when dealing with the earth-born men (1364); the Hellenistic Medea is not even present to witness Jason's trial. If we turn to Valerius, we find an altogether more active heroine, for his Medea bewitches Jason's limbs and weapons, assists his arming and even exercises mysterious power over the absent

33 Gärtner (1994) 217.

34 The whole story is told by Ovid at *Met.* 4.416–542.

35 Textual uncertainty makes this simile difficult to discuss in detail. For contradictory analyses of the problems, see Liberman (2002) 394–5 and Spaltenstein (2005) 475–6.

36 This line functions as a summary of the full description of her powers at 6.439–48.

bulls (7.463–6). And not only is she present, she actively intervenes to protect her lover (584–6). If Medea is a partner with Jason in dealing with the first bull (589), she is actually responsible for disarming and taming the second (596–9). Similarly, in dealing with the earth-born men this Jason uses no random rock lying on the plain,³⁷ but a helmet treated with infernal poison by Medea (632). Indeed the Valerian narrator attributes the mutual slaughter of the earth-born men not to Jason but to Medea (637–8).

Further, for a woman controlled by the gods, Valerius' Medea possesses a remarkable degree of inwardness. The focus on the inner workings of Medea's mind that I noted in Book 7 is actually characteristic of the way she is represented in the poem's last four books. Thus when in Book 5 Medea is presented as waking from a dream, Valerius focuses on the girl's emotions, her terror (*territat*, 329), her fear (*pavens*, 335), her desire not to be separated from her loving father (336). Similarly, he emphasises her fear at seeing the Greeks' arrival (*trepidam*, 358). And in Book 6, perhaps the most typically 'epic' book of the poem, the narrative oscillates between describing heroic action from the perspective of a quasi-Homeric narrator and presenting battle from Medea's point of view. Moreover, as Lovatt observes,³⁸ the nature of Medea's viewing changes, for she begins as a disinterested observer but ends by identifying so closely with Jason that she begins to fall in love with him (6.752–60). Book 8 employs a range of devices to underline Medea's shifting emotional states: descriptions of her weeping as she abandons her familiar couch or clings to Minerva's statue (6–9, 202–4), reports of speeches expressing a daughter's love of her father³⁹ or the strength of her commitment to Jason or denouncing his disloyalty (10–15, 46–53, 415–44), an apostrophe which underlines her sense of shame and guilt (312–15) and similes suggestive of her frenzy (20–3, 446–50). Despite the fact that she is manipulated by the gods to achieve their world-historical ends, the Valerian Medea is no hollow cipher.

Medea: From Nausicaa to Proserpina

If there is a tension between Medea's subjectivity and her role in human history, there is a further tension between Medea as she is when the Argonauts arrive and Medea as she will be. In Jupiter's view Medea is 'impious' (*impia*, 4.13, 5.686), while for the narrator she is 'terrifying' in Book 5 (*horrenda*, 220) and

37 Cf. Ap. Rhod. 3.1363–6.

38 Lovatt (2006) 72.

39 For the importance of Medea's love of her father, see Zissos (2012).

a ‘monster’ in Book 6 (*monstri*, 45). It is surprising therefore that the primary textual model for Medea when we first meet her in Book 5 is Homer’s Nausicaa, a character that no reader could describe as ‘impious’ or ‘monstrous’. Note the similarities.⁴⁰ Like Medea, Nausicaa is introduced to the reader as dreaming of marriage (*Od.* 6.13–47; Val. Fl. 5.329–40).⁴¹ In response to their dream both girls make for a nearby river (*Od.* 6.71–84; Val. Fl. 5.341–2). Both girls are then likened to divinities, to Artemis in the case of Nausicaa (*Od.* 6.102–9), to Proserpina, Pallas and Diana in the case of Medea (Val. Fl. 5.343–7). While both girls might be expected to show fear when approached by a stranger, Nausicaa is encouraged by Athena (*Od.* 6.139–40), while Medea is fortified by her nurse, Henioche (Val. Fl. 5.358–62). Note too that both heroes are beautified by their patron goddesses, Odysseus by Athena (*Od.* 6.229–35), Jason by Juno (Val. Fl. 5.363–72). Even more telling is the fact that the first lines of Jason’s speech are effectively a translation of Odysseus’ first words to Nausicaa. Here is the opening of Odysseus’ speech:⁴²

θεός νύ τις ἦ βροτός ἐσσι;	
εἰ μὲν τις θεός ἐσσι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν,	150
Ἄρτέμιδι σε ἐγὼ γε, Διὸς κούρη μέγαλοιο,	
εἰδός τε μέγεθός τε φυήν τ’ ἄγχιστα ἔϊσκω·	
εἰ δέ τις ἐσσι βροτῶν, τοὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ ναιετάουσι,	
τρὶς μάκαρες μὲν σοὶ γε πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ,	
...	
κεῖνος δ’ αὖ περὶ κῆρι μακάρτατος ἔξοχον ἄλλων,	158
ὃς κέ σ’ ἐέδνοισι βρῖσας οἰκόνδ’ ἀγάγεται.	

Are you a god or mortal? If you are a god, one of those who hold wide heaven, I liken you most nearly to Artemis, daughter of great Zeus, in form and size and stature; but if you belong to the mortals who live in this

40 Some of these similarities are pointed out by Gärtner (1994) 138.

41 For discussion of the differences in the girls’ dreams of marriage, see Zissos (2012) 100–2.

42 Stover (2012a) 192–3 rightly points to Ovid’s use of the same Odyssean passage for Salmacis’ encounter with Hermaphroditus at *Met.* 4.320–6 and argues that ‘the allusion to the episode in Ovid . . . gives a remarkable irony to Jason’s *te sibi iunxerit*. For the ultimate result of Salmacis’ love for Hermaphroditus is that the two become physically inseparable’ (193). I would draw a somewhat different conclusion (viz. that Jason is a potential rapist) because Ovid uses of Salmacis language that he uses elsewhere of male rapists (e.g. *vix iam sua gaudia differt* (*Met.* 4.350), cf. *Met.* 6.514: *vix animo sua gaudia differt* (of Tereus); *Met.* 4.316: *cum puerum vidit visumque optavit habere*, cf. *Fasti* 3.21: *Mars videt hanc visamque cupit potiturque cupita*).

country, three times happy are your father and lady mother . . . but he is most happy in his heart beyond others, who, having weighed you down with a dowry, leads you home.

(Hom. *Od.* 6.149–54, 158–9)

And here is how Jason begins:

si dea, si magni decus huc ades . . . Olympi,
has ego credo faces, haec virginis ora Dianae

...

si domus in terris atque hinc tibi gentis origo, 382
felix prole parens olimque beator ille,
qui tulerit longis et te sibi iunxerit annis.

If goddess, if you have come here as a glory of great Olympus, I believe that these are the torches, this the face of virgin Diana . . . If your home is on earth and your family's origin is from here, happy is your father in his offspring, and happier is he who will one day carry you off and unite you with himself for long years to come.

(5.378–9, 382–4)

Given that Valerius generally favours Virgilian models, it is worth asking why he has preferred to exploit Homer's account of Odysseus' meeting with Nausicaa rather than Virgil's description of Aeneas' encounter with Dido in Book 1, another scene which recalls details from *Odyssey* 6.⁴³

One reason is that Medea and Nausicaa have the same social standing: both are young women, daughters of kings and potential brides. Dido, by contrast, is older, a queen in her own right and a widow who has forsworn marriage. A second reason is that virginity and its associated virtues are key elements in both Nausicaa and Medea. We see Nausicaa's virginal tact in her unwillingness to speak openly of marriage before her father (*Od.* 6.66–7), her courage in confronting the near-naked Odysseus (139–40), her generosity in attending to the stranger's needs (209–10), and her modesty and intelligence in refusing to appear in public with an unrelated man (255–315). Medea displays similar qualities. After Phrixus, appearing in Aeetes' dream, has spoken of Medea as 'leading the chaste choirs' (*fert castos Medea choros*, 5.239), the narrator associates her with Hecate's 'chaste groves' (*castis . . . lucis*, 335), emphasises her fear of separation from her father (336), her 'virginal fear' in speaking to a stranger

43 For discussion of Virgil's use of the Nausicaa episode, see e.g. Austin (1971) 166–9.

(*virgineo . . . metu*, 392) and her modesty, generosity and intelligence in providing a guide to lead Jason to her father's city (395, 399).

Consider the simile which immediately precedes the first meeting between Jason and Medea:

his turbata minis fluvios ripamque petebat
 Phasidis aequali Scythidum comitante caterva.
 florea per verni qualis iuga duxit Hymetti
 aut Sicula sub rupe choros hinc gressibus haerens
 Pallados, hinc carae Proserpina iuncta Dianae, 345
 altior ac nulla comitum certante, priusquam
 palluit et viso pulsus decor omnis Averno.

Troubled by these threats she made for streams and Phasis' riverbank with a band of Scythian girls accompanying her of her own age. Just as over the flowery hills of Hymettus in the springtime or beneath Sicilian crag, clinging on this side to the steps of Pallas, on that side next to dear Diana, Proserpina led the dances, taller and with no companion to rival her, before she paled and all her beauty was routed at the sight of Avernus.

(5.341–7)

In these lines Valerius prompts memories of two connected similes, Homer's likening of Nausicaa to Artemis (*Od.* 6.102–8) and Virgil's imitation comparing Dido to Diana (*Aen.* 1.498–502). It is striking, however, that while Valerius invokes Artemis/Diana, he does so only to displace her, for while Diana (along with Pallas) has a role in the simile, primacy is allotted to Proserpina. While elements of the simile may remind us of Homer (references to the dance, to mountains and to Diana), and the use of words like *caterva* ('band', 342), *iuga* ('mountains', 343) and *choros* ('dance', 344) remind us of Dido and Diana in *Aeneid* 1 (497, 498, 499), the situation depicted has more in common with accounts of the rape of Proserpina in *Metamorphoses* 5 and *Fasti* 4. Note, for example, the emphasis on the Sicilian setting, on the season (spring), on flowers and on Proserpina's companions.⁴⁴ Allusion to Ovid is appropriate because Valerius introduces new and negative elements into the simile's development. First, by mentioning 'dear Diana' (*carae . . . Dianae*, 345), he reminds readers of the closeness of Medea's relationship with Hecate (the 'infernal Diana' of 5.238). Second, he links Proserpina's abduction to Avernus and separation from

44 Sicilian setting: cf. *Ov. Met.* 5.385, *Fast.* 4.419–22; spring: *Met.* 5.391, 554; flowers: *Met.* 5.554, *Fast.* 4.437–42; companions: *Met.* 5.397, *Fast.* 4.451.

Ceres with Medea's flight and alienation from her parents. Note, however, the temporal precision: just as Proserpina's rape lies in the future, so does Medea's hatred of her 'wretched parents'.⁴⁵ At this point in the narrative Medea and Proserpina are equally innocent: catastrophe still lies ahead.

If we turn to Book 6, we find that the second simile used of Medea effectively continues the first:

lilia per vernos lucent velut alba colores
praecipue, quis vita brevis totusque parumper
florete honor, fuscis et iam Notus imminet alis.

Just as white lilies glow above all among the flowers of spring, whose life is short and whose whole glory blossoms briefly, and already dark-winged Notus threatens.

(6.492–4)

Although the subject matter of the similes is in some sense continuous, their contexts differ radically. Whereas in Book 5 Valerius could draw on epic models for similes to adorn the heroine's first encounter with the poem's hero, the situation in Book 6 is unprecedented, for now we have a goddess, Juno, who, having failed to achieve her goals by means of war, decides to exploit a girl to achieve her ends (439–40). Not surprisingly the similes are handled differently. If in Book 5 it is the surrounding narrative which makes explicit the ominous implications of the image, in Book 6 both simile and narrative point to disaster: in the narrative Medea is 'ill-starred' (*infelix*) and 'ignorant of coming evil' (490–1), while in the simile Notus will destroy the flowers.

It is important, moreover, to consider the lily's symbolism. The occurrence of the lily in both Ovidian versions of Proserpina's rape⁴⁶ and in Valerius' Proserpina-simile in Book 5 suggests that this flower connotes eroticism. Both the Corydon of *Eclogue* 2 and the Pygmalion of *Metamorphoses* 10 view lilies as appropriate lovers' gifts.⁴⁷ And they are used to highlight the glowing beauty of a beloved's face.⁴⁸ But lilies are also associated with sexual violence, and not only in the case of Proserpina, for they also occur in Propertius' version of the rape of Hylas by the nymphs and Ovid's story of Salmacis' rape of

45 As Gärtner (1994) 144–5 notes.

46 *Met.* 5.392; *Fast.* 4.442.

47 Virg. *Ecl.* 2.45; Ov. *Met.* 10.262.

48 E.g. Virg. *Aen.* 12.68 (Lavinia); Prop. 2.3.10 (presumably Cynthia); Ov. *Am.* 2.5.37 (presumably Corinna).

Hermaphroditus.⁴⁹ And the lily is also connected with death and lamentation, as with Marcellus in *Aeneid* 6 and Hyacinthus in *Metamorphoses* 10,⁵⁰ perhaps because the lily is proverbially short-lived.⁵¹

Every aspect of the lily's symbolism is pertinent in Medea's case. The context is erotic, for Juno aims to make Medea fall in love with Jason. Sexual violence is also pertinent, for, as I have already argued, Medea is in some sense raped. And so too is the association with mourning, because this simile is immediately followed by Hecate's lament for her lost acolyte (495–502) and in Book 8 by the dirge of the women of Colchis (140–74) and of the land itself (207–11). As for the wind which threatens the lily, it is worth noting that in the ekphrasis in Book 5 it is Notus that brings Jason and the Argo to Colchis (5.438).

Valerius confronts the problem of reconciling the Medea familiar from epic (the princess who helps the foreign hero) with the Medea well known from tragedy (the woman who kills her sons) more explicitly and in greater detail than Apollonius of Rhodes. In doing so he creates a Medea radically different from her predecessors, a girl manipulated by divine forces and so destined to become a murderer with a pivotal role to play in human history.⁵²

49 Prop. 1.20.37; Ov. *Met.* 4.355.

50 *Aen.* 6.883; *Met.* 10.191, 212.

51 Hor. *Carm.* 1.36.16: *breve lilium* ('the short-lived lily'); Ov. *Ars* 2.113–16.

52 I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Australian Research Council for this project.

Teamwork, Leadership and Group Dynamics in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Helen Lovatt

Ancient epic has often been mined by management studies for approaches to leadership: Odysseus and Aeneas stand out as models of more or less successful leadership.¹ However, the *Argonautica* is the only ancient epic myth that can really be said to be about a team. Odysseus and Aeneas are the men who sum up and stand for their whole epics; even the *Iliad* is fundamentally centred around Achilles. But Jason is always 'Jason and the Argonauts'. While Odysseus struggles against his men, and Aeneas suffers on behalf of his men, Jason needs the help of his men to reach the goal of his journey. Valerius Flaccus' Flavian *Argonautica* has often been read as a recuperation, a re-epicisation of Apollonius' Hellenistic poem.² His Jason is stronger, more Aeneas-like, more military; but he is still surrounded by a team of heroes who often eclipse him. Castelletti has examined above (pp. 173–91) Jason's portrayal in Valerius; this chapter addresses the other Argonauts. Who does Valerius choose to make up the team and why? How does he present them? What differences are there from Apollonius? To what extent is Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* a 'team epic'? And what is the significance of these questions for a reading of Valerius Flaccus' epic?³

1 On the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, see Nelson (2008). For a psychological reading of group dynamics in the Argonaut myth, see Usandivaras (1977). The Argonauts are frequently used as an image for entrepreneurial adventuring, and the myth has passed into management studies via the influential Malinowski (1922); see for instance Saxenian (2006).

2 Hershkowitz (1998b) 105–89; Schenk (1999); more recently Stover (2012a).

3 Previous contributions on this question include Kleywegt (1991), who goes through the Argonauts character by character and analyses how important they are in the poem, and Dräger (2004), who emphasises the importance of sons of Jupiter and Apollo, and the increased importance of Tiphys, as further evidence of Valerius' obsession with fate.

The Catalogue of Argonauts

To see how the team is represented, we need to explore briefly who they are and how they are described.⁴ Valerius Flaccus' catalogue comes much later in the first book than that of Apollonius. Jason does not call the Argonauts together: rather he prays to Juno and Pallas, and Juno spreads rumours of the ship and glory to come (Val. Fl. 1.96–9). Hercules and Hylas are first to arrive (107–12), much to Juno's disgust, so that she turns her eyes away, and we do not see the other Argonauts arrive.⁵ Apollonius sets the team at the forefront of his poem: after Phoebeus, next come the men who propelled the Argo; the first substantial episode is his catalogue (1.20–233). Valerius begins with Pelias (after the invocation), as Virgil's *Aeneid* begins with Juno. He waits for the Argonauts to board the ship before listing them for us, setting them out in their seating positions in the Argo. As well as integrating catalogue and narrative, this has the effect of making Jason more prominent relative to Apollonius' Jason, although Hercules, too, is singled out as exceptional, beyond (before) and above the standard catalogue and its tropes.

Valerius' crew is rich in references to the material of other epics: Telamon opens the list, father of the enormous Ajax. Telamon and Peleus are part of Apollonius' crew, as are Oileus and Menoetius, but Nestor and Tydeus are not. Further, Menoetius is specifically identified as the father of Patroclus, who is left behind with Chiron to play with Achilles (1.407–10), and Oileus as the father of the other Ajax, destroyed by Athena's thunderbolt (1.372–3). Tydeus, too, is a new addition to the crew, and the father of the Homeric Diomedes; Philoctetes evokes the later parts of the Trojan cycle. In Apollonius the emphasis is on tendentious engagement with the poetic tradition, while in Valerius the frequent allusions to the Trojan War to come build up the epic credentials of the poem.⁶ This might be contrasted with Ovid's Calydonian boar hunt, in which Iliadic heroes and their parents are inserted to heighten the parodic contrast with Iliadic heroism.⁷ The Argonauts from Apollonius whom Valerius omits are the more obscure figures, reducing the quotient of Hellenistic learning in favour of familiar literary figures.

4 The best overall discussion of the catalogue is that of Zissos (2008), general comments at 239–42. See also Reitz (2013).

5 Hershkowitz (1998b) 39–40 on this disruption of audience expectations.

6 Zissos (2008) 262 points out 'VF's strategy of "Iliadic prolepsis"' in connection with the introduction of Tydeus; xlvii discusses the particularly 'Homeric' nature of Valerius' similes, in contrast to Apollonius' more Hellenistic similes.

7 Horsfall (1979).

How does the way the Argonauts are represented in the catalogue shape our impression of what is to come and how they will function as a team? Apollonius and Valerius Flaccus vary their emphases—Apollonius gives more examples of the special skills of the Argonauts (Orpheus: 26–31; Erytus and Echion: 52; Mopsus: 65–6; Tiphys: 105–8; Idmon: 139–45; Castor: 147; Lynceus: 153–5; Periclymenus: 158–60; Euphemus: 180–4; Zetes and Calais: 219–23): for instance, Lynceus' sharp sight that can pierce the underworld; Periclymenus' ability to change his shape; Euphemus' running, so swift that he can run over the sea. Valerius Flaccus may omit some of these skills because they are so well known he does not need to include them (Zetes' and Calais' flying). Apollonius plays with audience expectations: we are expecting each of these special Argonauts to play their part, as in the economy of fairy tales. But when Euphemus, Lynceus, Zetes, Calais and Canthus form a search party in Book 4 to look for Hercules, in whose footsteps they still travel, the only result is that Lynceus catches a distant glimpse of him (4.1458–84). Their magical abilities are wheeled out, but they do not succeed in catching or even securely viewing Hercules, and they return empty-handed. The episode serves to underline the emptiness of epic teleology and the artificiality of narrative economy, in typical Hellenistic fashion.⁸ The supernatural abilities of the Argonauts emphasise Apollonius' wayward narrative tactics. Only a few of the Argonauts (Pollux, Orpheus, Zetes and Calais) actually use their skills.

In contrast, Valerius' catalogue has a greater interest in what the future holds.⁹ The fates of seven Argonauts are discussed, including that of Canthus, who will die in Valerius' fabricated civil war at Colchis, compared with three mentions of the future in Apollonius, giving epic teleology a stronger importance.¹⁰ Looking forward to the Trojan War, though, has a paradoxical effect on the epic credibility of the *Argonautica*. By evoking epic credibility from other stories, the catalogue underlines the less-than-straightforwardly epic quality of this particular story. Tydeus and Nestor are so much Homeric window-dressing.

There is not, in fact, a great change from the version of Apollonius in the relationship between Jason and his team, or the team and the events to come. Jason does frame the catalogue (his farewell at 348–9; his joy at suborning

8 On Hercules and heroism in Apollonius, see Hunter (1993) 25–36, with some discussion of the elusiveness of Hercules in Africa. See also Feeney (1987).

9 Hershkowitz (1998b) 41 points out the contrast with Apollonius, who focuses more on the past.

10 Apollonius' mentions of the future: Canthus and Mopsus: 1.77–81; Idmon: 139–41. Valerius' mentions of the future: Idmon: 1.360–1; Oileus: 373–4; Nestor: 381–2; Philoctetes: 391–3; Iphis: 441–3; Canthus: 450–2; Polyphemus: 457–60; Lynceus: 462–7.

Acastus at 484–6). He has agency in exempting the old man Iphiclus from the rowing (473–6). However, the catalogue begins with Telamon and Hercules as if all are in place automatically: Jason's role as leader is not emphasised. The final section, which presents the non-rowing Argonauts, each with their different roles, does bring out their close relationship as a team working together: Lynceus as look-out, Zetes and Calais attending to the sails, Orpheus keeping the beat, Iphiclus for his wisdom, Argus to look after the ship, and Tiphys as helmsman. The spatial arrangement of the rowers also emphasises their working relationships.

The Cyzicus Episode

The first major military engagement for Valerius' Argonauts comes after they leave the Lemnian women and before they lose Hercules (Cyzicus episode: 2.634–3.480): they are welcomed by the Doliones and their king Cyzicus, and leave with friendship gifts, but in the night Tiphys falls asleep, and they are blown back to the island. Cybele takes vengeance on Cyzicus for killing her lion when hunting by making the two groups attack each other in the dark, and the Argonauts' slaughter of the Doliones culminates with Jason killing Cyzicus. When dawn comes, both sides are plunged into grief and depression, which Mopsus eventually dispels through ritual purification. As the Argonauts go on their way, Hercules suggests a rowing competition and then immediately breaks his oar.¹¹ Valerius' version is different from that of Apollonius in a number of ways: in Apollonius the Doliones live side by side with six-armed earth-born men, who attack the Argonauts and are shot down by Hercules (1.989–1011).¹² Valerius expands the episode considerably, reducing the role of

11 On this episode with further bibliography, see Manuwald (1999); for a recent reading, Stover (2012a) 113–50.

12 Stover (2012a) argues that Valerius' Doliones take on the gigantic and monstrous aspects of the earthborns in Apollonius, hence portraying the Argonauts as the force of order, analogous to the Flavian emperors, using the gigantomachic imagery as a political allegory, as in the reading of Virgil in Hardie (1986). Cyzicus certainly does suffer from rage and madness, but the Argonauts seem to be similarly contaminated with it; they may act in self-defence, but the tragedy befalls both sides. Cyzicus is both foolhardy like Pentheus in the *Bacchae* and pitiable like Ascanius in *Aeneid* 7 when he shoots Silvia's stag; he does not seem seriously hostile to the gods, however. The episode seems to represent more the arbitrariness of divine vengeance (as with Venus in the Lemnian episode) than any forces of order renewing the world.

Hercules, and creating a varied interplay between the Argonauts as collective and as individuals.

The moment when they arrive back at the island and realise they are under attack is particularly striking: Jason gives a brief rousing speech, appropriate to the leader in battle, but also dedicates the battle as his first one to his father (3.81–2),¹³ and then springs first from the ship, compared to the chariot of Mars jumping into the midst of the Bistonians as they fight (3.83–6).¹⁴ He is first, but not alone:

sequitur vis omnis Achivum.
adglomerant latera et densis thoracibus horrens
stat manus aegisono quam nec fera pectore virgo
dispulerit nec dextra Iovis Terrorque Pavorque,
Martis equi. sic contextis umbonibus urgent . . .

The whole force of the Achaeans follows.
They gather together their sides and, bristling with densely packed
breastplates,
the band stands, and the wild virgin with her Aegis-sounding breast
would not have dispelled them, nor would the right hand of Jupiter, or
Terror and Panic,
the horses of Mars. So they press on with their shields woven together . . .
(Val. Fl. 3.86–90)¹⁵

In the face of the shouting enemy, the Argonauts are an *immota phalanx* ('unmoved phalanx', 3.97), compared to a mass of cloud assaulted by competing storm winds (3.91–4). Jason's pre-eminence, the fact that he leads from the front, is set next to the idea of the group of Argonauts as a closely knit, well-trained military force. He is a more effective leader, and they are a more effective team.

The dynamics of the battle narrative are surprisingly distributed: Apollonius focuses first on Cyzicus killed by Jason (1.1030–9), and then on a list of the

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- 13 Dinter (2009) 558 points out that this dedication replaces an Apollonian aetiology, creating an epigrammatic moment for Jason; he argues that Valerius uses evocations of epitaphs to make the *Argonautica* into an epitaph for the Golden Age.
 - 14 Hershkowitz (1998b) 119–20 sees this as part of the militarisation of Jason, now 'equal to Ares', like a Homeric hero.
 - 15 The text of Valerius Flaccus used is that of Liberman (1997, 2002); translations are my own.

other Argonauts with their respective victims (1.1039–47). In Valerius the battle extends from 3.74 to 3.248, but the structure is diffuse and moves from Argonaut to Argonaut, giving each his moment of glory. As they stand in a tightly packed group, three Argonauts (Mopsus, Eurytus and Tydeus) set their sights on the same man, but it is Tydeus who kills him, first making an Iliadic boast (103–5). Tydeus does not have an extended *aristeia*, however; rather the Doliones attack *agmine caeco* ('in a blind column', 110) and four die without identifying their killers. Hercules enters the fight at 133, but he does not have an extended moment, either; instead we move at 137 to Peleus and Ancaeus. Nestor intervenes with a speech of advice (143–4), but even that is brief. Jason (called *dux campi*, 'leader of the field', 151) and Hercules both have ten-line *aristeias*, balanced against each other (150–60, 161–71). After this come Idmon, Hylas, Castor and Pollux (as a duo) and Canthus, with one kill each. Then follows Telamon with another mini-*aristeia* (198–206), and a renewed invocation from the poet, leading into the climactic death of Cyzicus (220–42). This death is presented very much from the point of view of the victim, with Jason's spear whistling into the picture as if incidentally. He does not even stalk him or gaze at him as Arruns gazes at Camilla in *Aeneid* 11. The battle finishes as it began: with collective action, tension and emotion:

nec terga ruentum
mens Minyis conversa sequi: stetit anxia virtus.
ecce autem primos iam spargere lumine portus
orta dies notaeque (nefas) albescere tures.

There was no mind in the Minyae to pursue the turned backs
of those in flight: but anxious masculinity stood firm.
But behold now the risen day scattering light on the first
harbour and the well-known (unspeakable!) towers growing white.
(3.255–8)

The whole group have one mind, one courage: and the whole group experience a collective recognition of what they have done. Tiphys stands out (and cries out) as the one responsible for falling asleep and allowing them to be driven off course (259–61), but the whole group are paralysed by horror (262–3). This collective responsibility is set into relief by the comparison with Agave in the *Bacchae* whose fellow bacchantes desert her (263–6). Jason, like Tiphys, is singled out, because his spear killed the king: at 270–2 he calls out to the relatives of the dead, but proclaims: *sumus en Minyae, sumus hospita turba* ('Look! We are the Minyae! We are a crowd of guests!', 272). The Minyae weep together:

stant Minyae deflentque ('The Minyae stand and weep', 284), but their consolation of Jason for his bitter lot (*sortem... acerbam*, 285) leads into a long lament by Jason in which he seems to give his own role importance far above what actually happened in the narrative of the battle. Collective action continues through the preparations for the funeral (*urgent... decorant... locant*, 'they rush... they adorn... they place,' 332–4)—though Jason personally attends to the body of Cyzicus—and the rites (347–51—combination of the Minyae acting and impersonal verbs). After the funeral the Minyae suffer from collective depression (362–8), and although Jason is singled out, it is for not being different:

ipse etiam Aesonides, quamquam tristissima rerum
castiganda duci vultuque premenda sereno,
dulcibus indulget lacrimis aperitque dolorem.

Even the man himself, the son of Aeson, although the saddest matters
ought to be checked by a leader and suppressed behind a tranquil face,
he gives in to sweet tears and lays bare his grief.

(3.369–71)

He relies on the skills of Mopsus to extricate them from the emotional doldrums of grief, and Mopsus, through knowledge and ritual, is able to involve the Argonauts in a return to morale. As they have mourned collectively, so their spirits return collectively (459–64), marked by an equal and opposite simile to that which marked their disembarkation at Cyzicus, in which Jupiter dispels clouds rather than gathering them (465–9).

Finally, the rowing competition, which ends this episode at 3.474–80, puts a different emphasis on competition with Hercules: in Apollonius at 1.1153–71 they all begin competing to see how hard they can row and how long they can keep going; eventually only Hercules is rowing, and he rows single-handedly for a while before his oar breaks. In Valerius the competition has only just begun, started by Eurytus and Idas, when Hercules breaks his oar and knocks over several of the other Argonauts. This makes Hercules stand out from the team both less and more: Apollonius emphasises his pre-eminence by dwelling on his single-handed propulsion of the boat, while Valerius' Hercules is so strong that the oar cannot stand up to his full strength even for a short time. The competition is over before it has begun, so that on the one hand we could argue that Hercules has not really won, but on the other we can argue that he is so far above the Argonauts they cannot even compete with him. It is notable that Jason is mentioned in neither episode.

The Abandonment of Hercules: Collective Responsibility?

Tension breaks out between the Argonauts when Hercules is left behind (3.611–725): this is one of the most revealing episodes for exploration of the way the Argonauts work as a team.¹⁶ Valerius puts much greater emphasis on dissension and debate by changing the timing of events. In Apollonius the Argonauts only realise that they have left Hercules behind when they are already at sea (1.1283). Valerius instead creates the opportunity for an extensive debate scene in which the Argonauts first wait (3.598–610) in collective tension: *Herculeo sub nomine pendent* ('They hang on the name of Hercules', 600). Jason, again, is singled out as part of the crowd: he too waits in bewilderment and lament (604–610; *ipse*, 604). As in Apollonius, Tiphys takes the initiative in insisting that they should seize the favourable wind (Val. Fl. 3.613–14; Ap. Rhod. 1.1274–5), just as Hercules himself rails against delay on Lemnos (Val. Fl. 2.373–84; Ap. Rhod. 1.862–74). Jason's speech does not pre-empt a decision, but instead calls for a debate (3.617–27). The heroes' response is presented as collective:

at studiis iamdudum freta iuventus
 orat inire vias; unum tanto afore coetu
 nec minus in sese generis dextrasque potentes 630
 esse ferunt. tali mentem pars maxima flatu
 erigit et vana gliscunt praecordia lingua.

But the youth now for a long time confident in their eagerness
 beg to go on their way: one would be absent from such a great gathering,
 nor are they lesser men themselves in race and powerful right arms,
 they say. The greatest part of the crew lift their minds
 with hot air and their hearts swell with empty speech.
 (3.628–32)

The threat of actual conflict in Apollonius (1.1284–6), while Jason is overwhelmed by *amechanie* and says nothing (1.1286–9), is only averted when Calais and Zetes restrain Telamon from attacking Tiphys. In Valerius the debate is more like that between Venus and Juno in *Aeneid* 10, or Turnus and Drances in *Aeneid* 11, with speeches from Telamon and Meleager, except that Telamon's contribution is in reported speech.¹⁷ The report of his speech encapsulates the paradox of Hercules' representation in the *Argonautica*: Hercules is just one of

¹⁶ On the abandonment of Hercules, see Schenk (1986).

¹⁷ On the Turnus/Drances connection, see Schenk (1986) 56.

the crew; he would do the same for any crew member (3.641–2); on the other hand, no one could help them like Hercules in the barbarian lands they face (3.642–5). This reflects the way that Valerius has both augmented and devalued the role of Hercules in the poem.

One of the key points in the argument for Valerius' recuperation of Jason's heroism is his suppression of the episode in Apollonius in which Jason orchestrates a leadership election, in which Hercules is immediately chosen, but refuses the role, instead passing it back to Jason (1.331–49). There seems to be no question about Jason's leadership of the expedition in Valerius; however, Hercules is still set apart from the other Argonauts because he is the only member of the crew whose arrival we see (1.107–11). In the storm of Book 1, Hercules like the other Argonauts is helpless against the weather: *magnanimus spectat pharetras et inutile robur | Amphitryoniades* ('The great-hearted son of Amphitryon watches his quiver and useless club', 634–5). Just as Jason is in the episodes above, here Hercules is singled out as one of the crowd. The storm scene emphasises the collective response of the Minyae, as a group recapitulating the terror and laments of Odysseus and Aeneas in their respective epic storms.¹⁸ Even Hercules is overwhelmed by nature, though his response is resignation rather than terror. Arguably Hercules has a bigger role in the poem than in that of Apollonius, since Valerius includes the rescues of both Hesione and Prometheus.¹⁹ But both events take place away from the Argonautic voyage, digressions from the epic narrative. Stover uses Meleager's speech to argue that Hercules is an exemplum of recuperated epic heroism for the Argonauts, who can be read as multiple versions of Hercules:²⁰

vos, quibus et virtus et spes in limine primo,
tendite, dum rerum patiens calor et rude membris
robur inest.

18 *qui tum Minyis trepidantibus horror* ('What horror then for the panicking Minyans?', 1.621); *putant* ('they think', 1.625); lament attributed to them all (1.627–32); *haec iterant segni flentes occumbere leto* ('These things they repeat, weeping to succumb to a sluggish death', 1.633). *iterant* points out the hackneyed nature of these epic laments. Zissos (2008) 345 reads 'VF's resort to a "collective" monologue rather than a genuine one' as 'reminiscent of a tragic chorus'.

19 On Hercules in Valerius, see Adamietz (1970); Gärtner (1994) 289–91; Edwards (1999). Edwards points out the way that the doubleness of Hercules in Valerius is reflected in the use of his names: *Alcides*, *Hercules*, *Tiryntius*. He is both Stoic exemplar and hero beyond epic.

20 Stover (2012a) 184–5.

You, for whom there is both courage and hope on the first threshold [of heroism? of adulthood?],
 reach [for the stars, cf. 1.563, below], while there is suffering heat and raw strength in your limbs.
 (3.679–81)

It is worth noting that Hercules, along with Castor and Pollux, is the hero picked out by Jupiter, as he prophesies the success of the Argo and the apotheosis of these three heroes:

tunc oculos Aegaea refert ad caerula robur
 Herculeum Ledaque tuens genus atque ita fatur:
 ‘tendite in astra, viri . . .’

Then he turns his eyes to the blue of the Aegean gazing at
 the strength of Hercules and the race of Leda and thus he speaks:
 ‘Reach for the stars, heroes . . .’
 (1.561–3)

There is a clear tension between Meleager’s optimistic approach (‘We can all be Hercules’) and the narrator’s less optimistic judgement that the keenness of the Argonauts is so much hot air (*flatu, vana, gliscunt* at 3.631–2 stand out as a condemnation of the pride of the Argonauts). As with the conflicting optimistic and pessimistic prophecies of Idmon and Mopsus, Valerius offers us equivocation: is the example of Hercules within easy reach of the other Argonauts, or will he always be out of their league?

Telamon’s speech in response to Meleager, and its narratorial frame, reinforces the tragic or pessimistic side of this episode: Telamon, here called *Aeacides* (3.693), emphasising his Homeric credibility, sees the rejoicing of the Argonauts as they follow Meleager’s exhortations as madness (*furias*, 692). His lament may be empty (*inanes iras*, 696), like the Argonauts’ earlier boasting, but it reveals the elision of the election scene to have been a narrative suppression rather than a Valerian omission: *cunctus ad Alciden versus favor: ipse iuaret, | ipse ducis curas meritosque subiret honores*. (‘All favour turned to Alcides: he himself should help, he himself should undertake the cares and deserved honours of the leader’, 701–2) In a paradoxical final twist, their passivity is emphasised as they leave (*fata trahunt*, ‘the fates drag them’, 717), just as Cyzicus is dragged to his doom (*fata trahens*, ‘fate dragging him’, 221). Jason, like Pompey in the run-up to Lucan’s battle of Pharsalia, is carried away by the determination of his men, but even as he dries his eyes (718), grief seizes them

all again and as they leave they lament (719–25). The abandonment of Hercules leads inevitably to the tragedy of Medea. Zissos' point that the collective voice of the Argonauts is like that of a tragic chorus is a suggestive one, which deconstructs the frequently cited division of the poem into the optimistic epic first half and the pessimistic tragic second half.

Deaths of Idmon and Tiphys

The other crisis that allows opportunity for reflecting on the workings of the Argonautic team is the double deaths of Idmon and Tiphys at the beginning of Book 5. As spiritual and literal guides of the expedition, their loss threatens to leave the Argonauts directionless and offers an opportunity for Jason to take control. Tiphys is particularly significant in both Valerius and Apollonius. Throughout both poems, the helmsman is an important source of narrative control and momentum, an alternative centre of power to Jason (and/or Hercules). In Valerius Tiphys is given particular prominence in the catalogue by his position at the end (1.481–3). An especially fascinating simile underlines his power over the ship and the voyage: after the storm caused by Boreas, Neptune calms the sea, allowing the Argonauts' transgressive voyage to continue, not because it is part of Jupiter's providential plan, but because it will bring men under the power of the sea and allow Neptune to cause countless deaths. For these Neptune holds Tiphys partially responsible (1.649–50). After this Jason pours a libation from a goblet that was a gift to his father from Salmoneus, the king famous for blasphemously pretending to be Jupiter, complete with thunderbolt. Finally, as the ship shoots on its way, Tiphys is compared to Jupiter:

Tiphys agit tacitique sedent ad iussa ministri,
qualiter ad summi solium Iovis omnia circum
prona parata deo ventique imbresque nivesque
fulgoraque et tonitrus et adhuc in fontibus amnes.

Tiphys drives and his silent assistants sit waiting for orders;
just as around the throne of high Jove
ready and prepared for the god are the winds, the showers, the snows
the lightning and thunder and rivers still in their courses.
(1.689–92)

This series of comparisons melds Tiphys and Jason together in their responsibility for the transgressive voyage, suggesting both an affiliation with Jovian

order and a desire to rival and challenge it (with Salmoneus as the emblem of this tendency).²¹ Tiphys' control of the journey is presumptuous, and this presumption will result in his death.

Tiphys is important in Apollonius too, where he often takes control of the situation at moments specific to his knowledge and understanding of the ship and sailing, such as at 1.559–68, where he sets up the mast, and 1.955–60, where he orders a new and more weighty anchor; at 2.175–7 he steers through a dangerous wave in the Bosphorus, and at 2.584–5 he does the same as they pass through the Clashing Rocks. At other moments he takes control of the crew where one might have expected Jason's intervention: at 1.381–2 he urges the Argonauts to push harder as the ship is launched; at 1.519–23 he wakes the Argonauts to start the journey proper; at 1.1274–5 he orders the initial disembarkation without Hercules; at 2.556–9 and 573–4 he exhorts the Argonauts to row hard through the Clashing Rocks; at 2.610–20 he is the one to respond to their successful passage through the Rocks.

However, Valerius develops the story of Tiphys through intertextual resonances with the *Aeneid* to comment on the teleological drive of the poem and the relationship between Jason and his crew. In Apollonius, the return to the Doliones is accidental; the death of Cyzicus is caused neither by divine plan nor human error (or if it is, neither Argonauts nor readers know about it). This fits with Apollonius' Hellenistic distaste for or resistance to epic teleology. The end of the poem is simply the end, and Euripides' *Medea* lurks unstated behind the scenes. In Valerius, however, Tiphys falls asleep at the helm while they sail at night, in a reworking of Virgil's Palinurus episode of *Aeneid* 5. First at 2.35–72 we see Tiphys steering safely and authoritatively by the stars at night and teaching the other Argonauts about the constellations. This corresponds to the episode at the beginning of *Aeneid* 5 (12–34), when Palinurus shows his authority and effectiveness. Then at 3.32–40:

nox erat et leni caneabant aequora sulco
et iam prona leves spargebant sidera somnos.

...

ipse diem longe solisque cubilia Tiphys
consulit, ipse ratem vento stellisque ministrat

37

21 On problematic associations evoked by this sequence of imagery, see Feeney (1991) 333; Zissos (2008) 354–67. Zissos (2006a) gives a sophisticated analysis of the ambivalent nature of this episode, which Stover (2012a) 79–111 resists, arguing that Boreas is presented as a rebel against the Jovian plan (but understating the negativity of Neptune's intervention).

atque illum non ante sopor luctamine tanto
lenit agens divum imperiis . . . 40

It was night and the sea was white in the ship's smooth track
and now the eager stars were scattering light sleep.

...

Tiphys himself consults from afar the day and the setting
of the sun, himself tends to the ship by wind and stars
and to him comes sleep, by the commands of the gods,
never before with such a great struggle, driving it lulls him.

(3.32–3, 37–40)

This corrects both Apollonius and Virgil: it gives a more concrete reason for the Argo to return to the land of the Doliones and shows how extreme the Palinurus episode is; Sleep had no narrative need to knock Palinurus overboard, except that he must become the one sacrifice for the safe arrival of the Trojans in Italy. The *non ante* points out that this is a Valerian innovation. But Palinurus is guiding the Trojans towards their true *telos* of Italy, and by falling into the sea he forms the sacrifice that allows them to arrive. In contrast, neither Tiphys' sleep nor his death contributes anything other than digression, delay and destruction to the Argonautic narrative.

Here and elsewhere Tiphys is an emblem for the whole expedition, as Palinurus is the sacrificial representation of the Trojan expedition. At the beginning of Book 3, they leave the Doliones because the sea is calling Tiphys (*Tiphyn placida alta vocabant*, 2); when they approach Hercules' last stop, Tiphys is used as a synonym for the ship (*Tiphys . . . advehitur*, 3.483–5).²²

The final element of the Palinurus episode comes into play when Tiphys dies: after the loss of Palinurus, Aeneas himself takes over the guiding of the ships, saving them from the approaching rocks:

cum pater amisso fluitantem errare magistro
sensit et ipse ratem nocturnis rexit in undis.

When the father realised that the floating craft was wandering with
its master lost, he himself took charge of the ship on the night waves.

(Virg. *Aen.* 5.867–8)

22 This also happens in Apollonius at 2.619–20, where Tiphys drives the ship on.

Aeneas is here called *pater*, and in Book 5 he has taken full charge of his mission, replacing Anchises and Palinurus as both spiritual and actual guide. In contrast, the deaths of Idmon and Tiphys offer a chance for their doubles to step into their shoes. There are two prophets aboard the Argo, and Mopsus is the main mourner of Idmon (though Jason mourns too). Tiphys on his death-bed is imagined as a father whose children desperately pray for his recovery (5.22–6).²³ Despair at his illness and death is collective: all lament at 5.15–16 (*cunctique pavore | attoniti fundunt maestas ad sidera voces*, ‘all struck by panic pour sad words to the stars’); the Minyae cling to Tiphys at 5.28–9 and build his pyre together at 29–31. Burning his body is like burning the ship, burning the whole expedition (33–4).²⁴ Jason does voice their general lament (37–59), but when the time comes to appoint a new helmsman, they are all presented as considering the options, in their grief (63–4). The ship itself, or rather that part which comes from the oak of Dodona, makes the appointment of Erginus, another moment for Valerius to declare his independence from Apollonius, in whose version Ancaeus single-handedly brings back morale and gains the position by offering his services (Ap. Rhod. 2.851–98). Further, the bull simile that describes Erginus in Valerius is more usually used of the leader of an expedition rather than its helmsman (5.67–70).²⁵ Responsibility in Valerius’ *Argonautica* is much more fragmented and less focused on Jason than the *Aeneid* is focused on Aeneas, at least in the first half of the poem. Valerius uses Virgil to create anxieties about epic teleology similar to those already manifest in Apollonius. Valerius’ *Argonautica* uses Virgilian material to proclaim closer ties with Apollonius.

The Battle in Book 6

Book 6 is often read as a miniature civil war, and a show put on for the sake of Medea.²⁶ However, until Medea comes on the scene it is more like a miniature

23 Gärtner (1994) 248–9 discusses this simile in the context of similes that describe the Argonauts as a group. She argues that these similes show the dependence of the group on powerful individuals, i.e. the group focused around Jason, Hercules, Tiphys.

24 Hershkowitz (1998b) 8: ‘The death of Tiphys puts the Argonautic mission at risk in poetic and metapoetic terms.’

25 On bull similes in Statius and their antecedents, see Hershkowitz (1998a) 271–82. In Virgil, Aeneas and Turnus at *Aen.* 12.101–6; in Statius’ *Thebaid*: 1.131–6, 2.323–32.

26 On the war, see Fucecchi (1996) and (1997); Schenk (1999); Wijsman (2000a) and (2000b); Baier (2001); Fucecchi (2006). Stover (2012a) 181–218 treats the issue of heroism in Valerius Flaccus, with 207–16 tackling Jason’s *aristeia* in Book 6.

Iliad. As the troops on Aeetes' side wait to fight, the Argonauts stand around Jason and Pallas at 173–6, but Jason himself does not become the focus of the battle narrative until line 429, when the watching Juno turns her thoughts to how the Argonauts will actually acquire the Fleece.²⁷ The first significant *aristeia* is given to Castor (203–41), to balance the prominence of Pollux in his fight with Amycus (4.99–343).²⁸ Castor is initially attracted by brothers on horseback (203–4) and must appropriate his own horse (207–9), at which point Jupiter watching from above laughs in recognition (209–10).²⁹ Pollux is famous for his boxing and Castor for his horsemanship (both characterised as such in the catalogue of Book 1, 420–6), but in Apollonius Castor is never given the chance to stand out. Valerius plays with the epic paradigm by allowing more members of the Argonautic super-team to show their star turns. At 231–42 Castor plays the one-against-many epic trope, but with a twist: one horseman against many horsemen. His skilful riding outdoes that of the Sarmatians just as Pollux' skill in boxing defeats Amycus' brutality.³⁰

The death of Canthus is also foreshadowed in the catalogue (1.450–6) and forms the climax of the next panel of the battle, told from the point of view of their opponent, Gesander (6.279–342).³¹ The battle over Canthus' corpse allows for some group work from the Argonauts: the warrior Idas, who scorns Medea's help in Apollonius, joins up with Tydeus, father of Diomedes, Menoetius, father of Patroclus, and Pollux to help Telamon, here again called Aeacides, to protect the corpse of Canthus from Gesander. Telamon is made even more Homeric by the evocative similes that describe the situation: at 6.346–7 he is a lion, hemmed in by hunters, protecting his cubs. This combines the description of Menelaus at *Il.* 17.656–64 as a lion kept away from his kill and frustrated by hunters, as he attempts to reach Patroclus, with the description of Achilles' bitter anger at the loss of Patroclus as like that of a lion whose cubs have been stolen by hunters at *Il.* 18.318–22.³² The competing forces struggling for the body of Canthus are compared to winds in conflict at 6.353–7,

27 Fucecchi (2006) 204 links this passage to *Il.* 2.445, in which the Greek leaders stand around Agamemnon.

28 Fucecchi (2006) 224.

29 Fucecchi (2006) 230 points out the *Iliadic* resonance of Zeus' pleasure, and contrasts this with the reaction to Camilla at *Aen.* 11.719–20.

30 Fucecchi (2006) 241 on the skill of Castor.

31 On Gesander as a version of Virgil's Mezentius, see Wijsman (2000a).

32 Other moments are also relevant: for instance, Hector and Patroclus struggling for the body of Cebriones at *Iliad* 16.756–61 are compared to two lions fighting over the body of a hind. Also *Aen.* 9.551, where the word *saepta* is used, of Helenor hemmed in by the Latins, but compared to a *fera* rather than a lion.

just as Hector and Patroclus struggling over the body of Cebriones (generalising out to the destructive forces of the wider Trojan and Achaean armies) are compared to the East and South winds competing to destroy woodland at *Il.* 16.765–71.³³ Valerius finishes off his sequence of Homeric similes with one that is unequivocally a reference to the battle over the body of Patroclus: at 6.358–62 the body of Canthus is compared to the hide of a bull softened by farmworkers stretching it in competition; similarly the body of Patroclus is like a bull's hide stretched in different directions by men standing in a circle (*Il.* 17.389–95). Further, Telamon's sevenfold shield (*septeno . . . tegmine*, 6.349; *clipei septemplicis*, 6.367) recalls that of his son, Homer's Ajax (*Il.* 7.245). The phenomenon of the Argonauts acting as a team (here in collaboration with the Amazons, Aeetes' allies) is closely associated with Iliadic epic.

After the beginning of Medea's teichoscopy the focus gradually narrows onto Jason, with Iliadic reminiscences now serving to strengthen Jason's heroic pedigree. Medea's first episode of viewing focuses on her brother, their ally Aron, and her nephews, the sons of Phrixus. At 6.545–52, Jason too is watching and is given only a brief moment of glory, followed by other Argonauts: Argus (553–6), Calais (557–62), Eurytus (569) and Nestor (569–71). After the next move to Medea, the focus (both hers and ours) is more squarely on Jason, now described in Iliadic terms (as the Dog Star at 606–8, cf. *Hom. Il.* 22.25–31, *Virg. Aen.* 10.272–5, but also *Ap. Rhod.* 3.957; as Caucasus at 610–11, cf. *Hom. Il.* 13.754, *Virg. Aen.* 12.701–3; as a maddened lion, 613–17). The Iliadic colouring continues with the death of Colaxes at 621–30, which derives from that of Sarpedon (*Il.* 16.431–61), and the death of Myraces (711–18), compared to an olive tree, as is Euphorbus at *Il.* 17.53–8. But Medea's lack of interest in Myraces extends to the roles of the other Argonauts:

sed non magis illa movetur
unius aegra metu quam te, Meleagre, furentem,
quam Talaum videt aut pugnas miratur Acasti.

but she is not moved by anything
except sick fear for one man, any more than when she sees you, Meleager,
as you rage, or Talaus, or wonders at the battles of Acastus.
(6.718–20)

33 Also echoed at *Aen.* 10.355–61—this connection is privileged by Wijsman (2000a) 65, who is arguing for strong links with the Mezentius episode. I am more interested in the Homeric flavour of this passage.

Medea's obsessive focus on Jason mirrors the way that the narrative eclipses the other Argonauts, far more in Valerius than in Apollonius. In Apollonius the negotiations with Aeetes feature Argus, Augeias and Telamon as well as Jason (3.304–448); the anger of Telamon at the tasks stands out (3.382–3). In Valerius, only the reactions of Jason and Medea are on display (7.28–100). There is no debate among the Argonauts as to how to deal with the impossible tasks (3.502–71); no Argonauts accompany Jason to the tryst (in Apollonius it is Argus and Mopsus, 3.912–18, sent away self-consciously by Hera at 3.927–46); in Apollonius, the Argonauts do not respond to his success with Medea (Ap. Rhod. 3.1163–72), help him prepare (1199–200), or test out his now invincible weapons (1248–55). In the feat itself, Jason looks back at his colleagues (7.593) and goes back to them (7.614–15), but we have little sense of their response as internal audience, until right at the end when we have a bare reference to their rejoicing (7.649). In Apollonius the Argonauts are set up as audience at 3.1268–77 and rejoice at 3.1347–8. Similarly, in Valerius Jason and Medea each go to the grove of the Fleece as if psychically aware of each other, in contrast to Apollonius, where Medea has to shout to the ship and is heard by Phrontis and Argus as well as Jason (4.75–81). The Argonauts as a group have been largely elided from Valerius' later books, to give a more claustrophobic focus on the relationship of Jason and Medea.

If we had the whole return journey, things might have been different.³⁴ We have a flavour of how tensions between Medea and the rest of the Argonauts might have been developed, as they are in Apollonius, in the final scenes of the extant poem. But as in Apollonius at 4.338–49, the Argonauts here function as a collective, their speech reported only indirectly (Val. Fl. 8.385–99). Even so Jason is about to accede to their demands (8.400–4), an Aeneas leaving Dido crossed with Pompey before Pharsalia, not in fact so much developed in decisiveness from earlier in either epic, when Medea intervenes and the text breaks off.

Conclusion

I finish by looking at one more brief reference that sets Jason in competition with the other Argonauts. As Medea catches sight of the Argonauts, a new repetition of Nausicaa, Jason is beautified by Juno, and only now does he become the most beautiful of the Argonauts:

34 Or would it all have ended abruptly with the death of Absyrtus, Turnus-style? Hershkowitz (1998b) 4–13 speculates attractively on this possibility. See also Nesselrath (1998).

iam Talaum iamque Ampyciden astroque comantes
Tyndaridas ipse egregio supereminet ore.

Now he surpasses in his outstanding beauty
Talaus, now Mopsus and even the Dioscuri with stars in their hair.
(5.366–7)

Stover points out Valerius' evocation here of Dido surpassing her courtiers (Virg. *Aen.* 1.501) and Diana standing out from her nymphs (Ov. *Met.* 3.182), and argues that Jason becomes the passive object of Medea's gaze.³⁵ But this image has implications for his relationship with the other Argonauts, too, who are reduced to the status of attendants. Castor and Pollux, along with Hercules, had been the heroes who in Book 1 stood out, favoured by Jupiter, for their imminent apotheosis. Here it is Jason who partakes of the divine. More or less straightaway afterwards, however, he is Sirius, not the Achillean Sirius but the Apollonian Sirius (5.368–72), like Jason approaching the tryst in the temple at Ap. Rhod. 3.956–9. Stover argues that the emphasis in Valerius on Sirius as outshining other stars shows Jason's pre-eminence as hero and leader; but it also reinforces his status as a beautiful boy, object of the audience's gaze. By allowing Jason to outshine the Argonauts, Valerius reminds us that Jason is not in fact destined for catasterism. The ship will reach the stars, Castor and Pollux will reach the stars, but Jason will be remembered for his passive beauty and his reliance on others.

35 Stover (2012a) 194–206.

My Family and Other Enemies: Argonautic Antagonists and Valerian Villains

Robert Cowan

A Very Brief History of Epic Villainy

Villains matter, whether by their presence or their absence. More precisely, it matters to the aesthetics and ideology of an epic whether its antagonists are depicted as morally reprehensible and deserving of defeat and destruction at the hands of the protagonist. Such a depiction tends (and even here we must beware of dogmatism or oversimplification) simultaneously to reflect and construct a worldview based around clear moral polarities whose boundaries justifiably can and indeed positively should be policed by the employment of violent and usually deadly force. Even if we do not employ a fully Foucauldian model whereby criminals, rather than being punished because they are wicked, must be constructed as wicked to justify their punishment, it should nevertheless be relatively uncontroversial that literary (and oral) texts can manipulate their characterisation to serve underlying ideological ends. The *Odyssey*, starting as it does with Orestes' execution of Aegisthus and ending (more-or-less) with Odysseus' slaughter of the suitors, comes closest to the construction both of such villainy and of such a *Weltanschauung*, though even here the picture is complicated.¹ Epics where the moral excellence of the protagonist and the moral turpitude of the antagonist are compromised—whether in their own right or by virtue of their polar relationship one to the other—tend to construct and reflect a more complex morality, in which right and wrong are not absolutes, or at least no one figure or side has a monopoly on them. The inevitable corollary of such a morality is that the violent suppression or destruction of one party by another can never have absolute moral justification. The moral chaos which reigns in the *Bellum Civile* and *Thebaid* is probably not the clearest example of this worldview, since Pompey and Polynices are not so much

1 '[J]ust as scholars continue to underestimate the extent to which the *Iliad* depicts a pattern of norms and punishments, so they still exaggerate the moral simplicity of the *Odyssey*, presenting it as an uncomplicated tale of villains punished and the righteous rewarded', Allan (2006) 16.

flawed ethical ideals as, in their own way, as depraved and tainted with *nefas* as Caesar, Eteocles and every other character in their nightmarish worlds.² In both poems, the central theme of internecine conflict, be it civil or fratricidal, further denies the possibility of clear moral demarcations, since both sides are twinned not just in wickedness but in all respects. In some ways, these epics are more closely related to the monolithic morality of the *Odyssey*, since it is the black-and-white worldview which they pervert into total blackness, rather than nuancing it into shades of grey. It is rather the *Iliad*, with its flawed (but still sympathetic) Achilles and its sympathetic (but still flawed) Hector, which offers the most unambiguously ambiguous moral outlook.³ To this we might add the *Aeneid*, to which most critics would concede at least a degree of moral complexity, even if the more extreme Aeneas-lovers and Turnus-haters (and indeed the even more extreme Aeneas-haters and Turnus-lovers) might dissent.⁴

For all of these reasons, villains matter particularly in Valerius' *Argonautica*. Of all classical epics, it sets up the clearest dichotomy between the forces of order and chaos, good and evil, heroes and villains, and of all classical epics it does the most to problematise that dichotomy. However, this problematisation results in neither moral absolutes nor moral complexity, but in the paradoxical juxtaposition of both, mutually exclusive, scenarios. The conflicting interpretations of the *Aeneid*'s ideology and, or rather *through*, its villains are important for the *Argonautica* not simply because it too has its 'optimistic', 'pessimistic' and 'somewhere in-between' readers, though unquestionably it

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- 2 It is of course beyond the scope of this chapter to offer detailed discussion of the controversial and polarising figures of Cato and Theseus. However, even setting aside the fundamental issue of the moral excellence of each of them, in purely formal and functional terms, neither is sufficiently prominent in his respective epic to act as more than, at best, a Stoic sideshow and a *heros ex machina*. For examples of the case for and against Cato, see Narducci (2001) and Sklenář (2003) 59–100; for Theseus, Braund (1996) and Dominik (1994) 148–58.
 - 3 Critics increasingly stress the privileged depiction of Greeks over Trojans in the *Iliad* (e.g. Stoevesandt (2004); Allan (2006)), but rarely to the extent of stark moral polarities.
 - 4 See esp. Johnson's ((1976) 115–16) parody of both such approaches: 'One may try to rationalize the dissatisfaction [sc. with the end of the *Aeneid*] by proving the villainy of Turnus ... for those who are content to read the poem as an ethical melodrama, such solutions are apparently adequate—once we have separated the good guys from the bad guys and the bad guys get what is coming to them, the beauty of the poem is found to be intact. Thus, a solution we would find banal in any ephemeral movie of our choice is found to be adequate in the hands of an acknowledged master of Western epic.' He goes on to pour equal scorn on those who demonise Aeneas and 'find the villain but call him anti-hero'. Nevertheless, thirteen years later Cairns ((1989) 84) could still write that 'the *furia* of Aeneas and Hercules are virtuous, while the *furor* of Turnus is evil'.

has.⁵ Rather this most self-conscious of epics in itself plays with notions of absolute good and evil, heroism and villainy, reflecting on them not only as categories of direct relevance to its own ideology, but as a contested issue in the epic tradition and its reception.

Valerius' villains fall into two broad categories: tyrants and monsters. One of the Argonauts' antagonists, the despotic giant Amycus, is both. This schematisation of the forces arrayed against the poem's heroes is doubly significant, both in its particulars and in the very fact that it is a schematisation. By setting the culture-hero ushers of the Jovian Iron Age in opposition to the Titanic, Earth-born, Sun-spawned and Neptune-sired monsters of Saturnian primitivism, Valerius is able to produce a series of emblematic encounters in which the new overcomes the old and order chaos, and in which the reader is encouraged to approve that process. The *Argonautica*'s tyrants fit into a different—though by no means unrelated—thematic system rooted in the cultural imaginary and political reality of the first century CE. The interrelation of these antagonists and their classification as types is self-consciously signalled to the extent that Valerius sometimes seems to privilege type over character, tyrant over individual. As a result, the schematisation does not only serve the poem's thematic ends, but reflects on its own—indeed epic's own—construction of modes of opposition, of the antagonist, of the villain. I shall briefly sketch the characteristics of Valerius' monsters and tyrants, as well as their individual instantiation, before returning to the issue of his self-conscious reflection on the creation and interpretation of the villain.

Reading Tyranny or The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Ruler

The remarkable prominence of the figure of the tyrant in the *Argonautica* has been long noted and well discussed.⁶ The abundance of *tyranni* would, by virtue of its sheer magnitude, be remarkable in any work, but is particularly so

5 Indeed it is striking how often the actual word 'villain' is used in the context of Valerius' epic, whether to criticise, defend or simply define his aesthetics and his ideology: 'This constitutes a potential criticism of Valerius' characterization technique, that the recuperative process twists and shapes subtly-drawn figures into cartoon characters, super heroes, *villains*, and vixens, brightly-coloured but without depth', Hershkowitz (1998b) 126; 'a conquering hero needs some *villains* for enemies—Virgil also has his Mezentius—and [Valerius'] view of the world is decidedly not as pessimistic as that of Statius or the one presented in Seneca's tragedies', Kleywegt (2005) 28 (my italics); see also Stover (2012a) 148, quoted below.

6 On the image of the tyrant in Roman thought, see esp. Dunkle (1967), (1971); in Valerius, see McGuire (1997), esp. 155–8, 162–4, 169–75; Hershkowitz (1998b) 242–74; Timonen (1998) 161–4; Ripoll (2003b); Anzinger (2007) 193–7; Zissos (2009).

in a quest epic where the politics of monarchy are not an obvious theme in the same way as in the *Bellum Civile*, the *Thebaid* and even the *Aeneid*.⁷ Valerius depicts and in many cases even terms as *tyranni* Pelias, Laomedon, Amycus and Aeetes.⁸ The prominence and stylisation of this type must be contextualised in the cultural and political climate of first-century CE Rome. Tyrants, of course, featured in earlier Roman thought and literature, but there is undeniably a particular explosion in the Julio-Claudian and Flavian periods. The frequent appearance of tyrants in the exercises of the declamation schools unquestionably had an impact on the thought-world of early imperial elite writers and readers, to the extent that Beard has even provocatively argued for their constituting a sort of Roman 'mythology'.⁹ Yet overlapping with and indeed feeding into this cultural and intellectual trend is of course the political institution of the Principate, in which models of the bad king were as important to think with as those of the good. Few scholars would now argue that Valerius' epic is not profoundly integrated into its historical context, engaging with contemporary political concerns.¹⁰ From this starting point, Valerius' tyrants can be made to stand as relatively straightforward but potentially reductive allegories either for past emperors in polemical propaganda or for current emperors in coded dissent.¹¹ Of course, meaning is generated at the point of reception, and it is extremely likely that many of Valerius' first readers would have detected parallels between his tyrants and their perception of any number of *principes*, past or present, according to their personal political views, but we should be careful before privileging such a narrowly and specifically allegorical interpretation of the *Argonautica* over others. Apart from anything else, the depictions of Tiberius, Gaius, Nero and Domitian preserved in Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny and similar authors, as well as those doubtless current at the time, are just as much part of the constructed type of the tyrant as Valerius' villains, so that the influence of Pelias on 'Nero' or Aeetes on 'Domitian' may be every bit as significant as that flowing in the opposite direction. Without wishing to offer too soft and broad an interpretative framework, it is unquestionably safest

7 On the *Thebaid*, see esp. Dominik (1994), on the *Aeneid*, Cairns (1989); few studies of Lucan do not engage substantially with the theme, but see esp. Bartsch (1997).

8 Pelias: 1.30, 71, 244, 5.659; Laomedon: 2.577, 4.59; Amycus: 4.751; Aeetes: 5.264, 319, 387, 470, 547, 6.16, 7.78, 87, 491. Several of these, such as 1.30 and 5.264, double as gnomic *sententiae* on 'the tyrant' as a type, in addition to their specific application to Pelias and Aeetes.

9 Beard (1993). On declamatory tyrants, see also Tabacco (1985).

10 See Bernstein in this volume.

11 E.g. Pelias and Aeetes as Nero: Taylor (1994) 228–31; all tyrants as images of Domitian: McGuire (1997) 147–54.

and arguably most enlightening to read Valerius' villainous tyrants as part of a thought experiment on the nature of political and specifically monarchical power, and how socially and morally desirable values can be preserved and acted upon in a world subject to such power.

Valerius' tyrants are part of that thought experiment, but—this being Valerius and the work one of the most self-conscious of all epics—they also contribute to a self-reflexive meditation on that thought experiment itself. The *Argonautica* dramatises and focalises through its interpreting characters how one 'reads' tyranny, in Roman epic, in Roman thought, and in Roman politics. Valerius' self-conscious stylisation of the 'type' of the tyrant is part of the meditation. Even should the reader be too imperceptive to detect the similarities between Pelias, Laomedon, Amycus and Aeetes—their uncontrolled anger, their treachery, their dissimulation, their terrible silences—similarities which repeatedly threaten to dissolve their individuality into stereotype, the internal reader Jason recognises and articulates the way in which the same schematised antagonist repeatedly confronts him in almost indistinguishable form.¹² After the Argonauts (with a little help from their Colchian allies) have defeated Perses' army on Aeetes' behalf, Jason reacts furiously to the tyrant's perfidious refusal to yield the Fleece:

alium hic Pelian, alia aequora cerno.
quin agite [et] hoc omnes odiisque urgete tyranni
imperiisque caput: numquam mihi dextera nec spes
defuerit. mos iussa pati nec cedere duris.

Here another Pelias, another sea I discern.
But come, all you tyrants, press with your hateful
commands on this head: never shall my right hand nor my hope
be lacking. It is my custom to endure orders and not to yield to adversity.¹³
(7.92–5)

Valerius here exploits the tropes of intertextuality to point his own *intra*-textuality. Just as Virgil's Sibyl marked the second half of the *Aeneid's* status as a

12 Anger: 1.722 (Pelias), 2.155 (Laomedon), 4.150–1, 205, 294 (Amycus), 5.519–25, 7.34 (Aeetes); treachery: 1.64 (Pelias), 2.555, 567–8 (Laomedon), 5.222, 7.89–92 (Aeetes); though free of deception, Amycus' perversion of *xenia* constitutes a violation of duties analogous to treachery; dissimulation: Hershkovitz (1998b) 242–74; silence: Anzinger (2007) 193–7, McGuire (1997) 147–84.

13 All translations are my own.

second *Iliad* by foreseeing 'another Achilles' (*alius . . . Achilles*, Virg. *Aen.* 6.89), so Jason underlines the repetition of his own epic experiences in Iolcus here in Colchis and the undifferentiated figure of the tyrant by 'perceiving' (a further trope for readerly interpretation) 'another Pelias' (*alium . . . Pelian*). Just as Seneca's Trojan women urge each other to 'surpass their wonted custom of lamentation' (*solitum flendi vincite morem*, Sen. *Tro.* 97), marking both their and their author's *aemulatio* of Euripides' *Troades* and other antecedents,¹⁴ so Jason schematises the response which is his 'custom' (*mos*) as a heroic protagonist to these schematised provocations by schematised tyrants.

Valerius is especially concerned with emphasising the disjuncture between the interests of his tyrants and those of their subjects. Since other aspects of the Valerian tyrant have been so thoroughly treated elsewhere, I shall focus on this underdiscussed but important dimension. The selfish pursuit of his own ends and desire to satisfy his own appetites, regardless of and even to the detriment of those he rules, is of course a, perhaps *the*, defining characteristic of the archetypal tyrant. In its most extreme form, the imposition of suffering on subjects who dare not protest and may even have to simulate joy is enacted without aim at any benefit to the tyrant himself other than the sublimated expression of absolute power, as with Seneca's Atreus' maxim that 'the greatest good of being king is that the people are forced to praise as well as bear their master's deeds'.¹⁵ Valerius' tyrants are not self-conscious, abstract theorists of their own despotism like Atreus, or Suetonius' Gaius, Nero and Domitian. Their actions against their people have the small saving grace of being part of a zero-sum game in which they do at least themselves derive some benefit or, more generally, avoid some harm. This in itself renders their motivation more comprehensible, more human and less simplistically 'villainous'. Yet it is not an obvious move on Valerius' part, but rather one which deliberately isolates the tyrant and sets him in opposition not only to the Argonauts but also to his own people. It would have been perfectly possible, and arguably more conventional, to have the passing, invading, civilising Argonauts face a uniformly, undifferentiatedly hostile mass of the barbarian or monstrous Other, perhaps synecdochised by but certainly not contrasted with their king. We might contrast the situation in the *Odyssey*, where the Laestrygonians are uniformly hostile to Odysseus and his companions, or, as we shall see below, Apollonius' Bebryces with their

14 Cf. Boyle (1994) on the previous line, *iterum luctus redeant veteres*, where the chorus' 'emphasis on repeated repetition suggests . . . the recycling of its lamentation from (many) previous texts'.

15 *maximum hoc regni bonum est, | quod facta domini cogitur populus sui | tam ferre quam laudare*, Sen. *Thy.* 205–7.

fierce if ineffectual loyalty to Amycus. We might also compare Virgil's complex manipulation of this motif in the second half of the *Aeneid*, especially the Latin council and the aftermath of the aborted duel, where Turnus is sometimes associated with, sometimes isolated from, the interests and desires of the Latins as a whole.¹⁶

Valerius chooses to mark the isolation of the tyrant in explicit terms. His Amycus is a source of fear not only for the unfortunate foreigners who enter his inhospitable realm, but also for his own people.¹⁷ The Argonaut Echion, quizzing Dymas as to his identity, speculates that he might be a disaffected Bebrycian, since 'the people are often more benevolent than their ruler'.¹⁸ Although this first guess about the Mariandynē Dymas' identity is wrong, Echion's generalisation about the difference between a king and his people holds true for the Bebryces, in contrast to what we might expect of such barbarians, and especially of this people who were so loyal to their king in Apollonius. When Amycus himself strides into Valerius' epic, we are told that 'not even his own people went without the anxiety of an unspoken fear when they beheld him' (*quem nec sua turba tuendo | it taciti secreta metus*, 4.200–1). The people are not only dissociated from their king, but implicitly aligned with the Argonauts and other foreigners, all of whom have good cause to fear Amycus. Yet his people's fear must be 'unspoken', dissimulated behind the mask of loyalty and devotion, in the manner so familiar from the pages of Tacitus and Suetonius, and—it is surely not too naively positivist to suggest—also in the real world which Valerius and his readers inhabited. Released from this fear and anxiety by the tyrant's death at the gloves of Pollux, they stop short of a chorus of 'ding dong the witch is dead', but certainly show no wish to avenge the king for whom they bore no love.¹⁹ Valerius here diverges pointedly and almost polemically from Apollonius' account, where the Bebryces, so far from having 'no love for their killed king' (*nullus adempti | regis amor*, Val. Fl. 4.315–16), rather 'were not neglectful of their king' (οὐδ' ἄρα Βέβρυκες ἄνδρες ἀφείδησαν βασιλῆος, Ap. Rhod. 2.99). While both sets of Bebryces end in scattered flight to

16 See esp. Thomas (1998).

17 On Valerius' Amycus, see esp. Adamietz (1976) 54–8; Shelton (1984); Wacht (1991a) 23–6; Hershkowitz (1998b) 78–9; Bettenworth (2003); Murgatroyd (2008); Leigh (2010).

18 *Bebryxne venis diversa quae regi | corda gerens—melior vulgi nam saepe voluntas*, 4.157–8.

19 The *Wizard of Oz* analogy is used by O'Hara (2010) 104 of the Latins' reaction to Turnus' death in Vergio's *Supplement* to the *Aeneid*, but see Rogerson (2013) for greater complexity in Vergio's Turnus. Hershkowitz (1998b) 203–4 emphasises the omission of 'an episode in which the Argonauts might have shown off their fighting skills' rather than the implications for the Bebryces' attitude to Amycus.

the hinterland (κέδασθεν | εἶσω Βεβρυκίης, Ap. Rhod. 2.135–6 ~ *Bebrycas extemplo spargit fuga*... | ... *montem celeres silvamque capessunt*, Val. Fl. 4.315–16), Valerius pointedly has this happen ‘immediately’ (*extemplo*), in contrast to the abortive and rather feeble but nevertheless substantial forty-line attempt at revenge which the Apollonian Amycus’ loyal subjects make on Polydeuces and the Argonauts. Intertextually as well as explicitly, Valerius underlines the isolation of his tyrannical Amycus.

Laomedon also rules over a people who are markedly opposed to him, though the relationship between tyrant and subjects differs in several significant ways from that between Amycus and the Bebryces.²⁰ Hercules, after rescuing Hesione from the sea monster, declares that the urgency of the Argonauts’ mission to Colchis prevents his accepting the king’s offer of hospitality (2.574–6), thus foiling Laomedon’s treacherous plot to murder him and preserving the fated doom of Troy (and rise of Rome, 567–73). The tyrant responds by promising still more rewards in addition to the white horses when Hercules calls in on the way back. In response to this, the Trojans lament:

promissa infida tyranni
iam Phryges et miserae flebant discrimina Troiae.

For the tyrant’s faithless promises
already the Phrygians weep and for the dangers of wretched Troy.
(2.577–8)

The disastrous result for Troy of these further provocations (as they will prove when not fulfilled) towards Hercules is evidently clear to the people. Indeed the first sack almost does occur prematurely at 4.58–9, or would have, in a moment of counterfactual sideshadowing, had not Latona, Diana and Apollo successfully supplicated Jupiter to direct Hercules to liberate Prometheus instead (4.60–81).²¹ Though the Trojans, like the Bebryces, bear, in Echion’s phrase, ‘hearts at variance to their king’, the differences between the situations are striking. The Trojans fear no violence or mistreatment directly from Laomedon himself, so that they are not aligned with the Argonauts as his potential victims, as the Bebryces were of Amycus.²² Indeed, Laomedon’s actions,

20 On Laomedon, see Barnes (1981) 366; Ripoll (2003b) 8–9.

21 Nesselrath (1992) 122.

22 Valerius does not emphasize any fearful concealment of the Trojans’ antipathy comparable to the Bebryces’ *taciti*... *metus* (4.201), but neither does he pointedly mark their dissent as public. Since *flebant* could suggest private, silent weeping (e.g. Stat. *Theb.* 11.146) or more

foreshadowing those of Aeetes, so far from uniting people and Argonauts in common peril, rather put the people in danger *from* the Argonauts (or, in the case of Troy, from one of their number, Hercules) as collateral damage in the conflict sparked between the Greeks and the tyrant. In addition to isolating the tyrant from his people, Valerius complicates his worldview of a stark battle between good and evil to one in which innocent bystanders can get caught up in the fight. Though there is very little good to be said about the shift, treacherous Laomedon, it should be noted that, unlike Aeetes, his actions are not deliberately aimed at the detriment of his people, even slightly the opposite. Whereas, as we shall see, Aeetes' retention of the Golden Fleece puts his own power ahead of his people's safety, Laomedon is at least trying to save Troy by treacherously murdering Hercules, even though the framing strongly implies that his motives are primarily self-interested.²³ Of course the almost tragic irony is that, in the same manner as Sophocles' Oedipus and all others who try to cheat oracles, it is his very attempt to avert disaster by killing his city's fated sacker which brings that disaster about by antagonising the previously friendly Hercules. Once more, the clean lines dividing the interests of wicked tyrant and innocent subjects, villainous antagonist and heroic Argonauts, are blurred.

Aeetes offers yet a third scenario. Like Laomedon, and unlike Amycus, his despotic self-interestedness does not directly threaten his people, thereby aligning them with his more obvious opponents, the Argonauts, but rather risks unleashing the hostility of the Minyae on innocent subjects as well as on the guilty tyrant. Yet unlike Laomedon, whose attempt to save his own throne would (if not so misguidedly doomed to failure) have incidentally saved his people, Aeetes' self-serving policy is set in clear, explicit and even public opposition to the interests of the Colchians. In the backstory which Valerius offers following the second proem, explicating the events leading to the situation in Colchis when the Argonauts arrive, the ghost of Phrixus appears to Aeetes and gives him a double warning, to get rid of Medea and to retain the Golden Fleece:²⁴

tunc tibi regnorum labes luctusque supersunt
rapta soporato fuerint cum vellera luco.

public lamentation (e.g. Val. Fl. 4.374–5), it is safest to assume that the Trojans' freedom of expression is simply not at issue here.

23 See Poortvliet (1991a) 289–90 for Valerius' innovation both in Laomedon's plan to kill Hercules and in his being motivated by the oracle rather than reluctance to surrender the horses.

24 On the apparition, see Bouquet (2001) 101–5.

Then the fall of your kingdom and grief are in store for you
when the Fleece is snatched from the lulled grove.

(5.236–7)

There is an ambiguity in this prophecy and in particular in the use of the word *regna*. Even *tibi*, emphatically positioned as dative of grammatical advantage and political disadvantage, does not make it clear that *regna* refers solely to Aetes' reign over Colchis and not to Colchis itself, over which he happens to reign. Of course in many scenarios—Priam's as opposed to Laomedon's Troy is an obvious example—the two are indivisible and it is the sack of the city which constitutes the end of the reign.²⁵ It is the unusual case of surgical regime change, in which the Argonauts' bloodless (until Absyrtus at Peuce, at least) theft of Aetes' *pignus imperii* opens the way for Perses' usurpation, which enables Valerius to drive a wedge once again between tyrant and subjects, giving them different outcomes even from the same oracle.

The reader is perhaps encouraged by Phrixus' ambiguity to take his warning as referring to reign and realm as a unified whole, until Apollo disambiguates:

interea auguriis monstrique minacibus urbem	
territat ante monens semper deus et data seri	260
signa mali, reddi iubet exitiale sacerdos	
vellus et Haemoniis infaustum mittere terris.	
contra Sole satus Phrxi praecepta volutans	
aegro corde negat nec vulgi cura tyranno	
dum sua sit modo tuta salus.	265

Meanwhile with threatening omens and portents the city
is terrified by the god who always warns in advance and by the signs he
gives

of belated misfortune, and the priest orders that the deadly
Fleece be returned and that they send the ill-omened thing to the
Haemonian lands.

Contrariwise, the Sun-born, turning the instructions of Phrixus over

25 Shelton (1971) 277 (cited by Wijsman (1996) *ad loc.*) detects an intratextual allusion to Jupiter's prophecy of the sack of Troy at 1.542–3 (*Asiamque labantem*). The planting of such a misleading parallel in the reader's mind would fit my argument, but the echo is an extremely faint one.

in his sick mind, says he will not, nor has the tyrant any concern for the people
provided his own security is safeguarded.
(5.259–65)

The final *sententia* has the double force of a comment on the particular narrative situation ('nor has the tyrant Aeetes...') and of a universal truth ('nor has "the tyrant" as a type'...), a duality which in itself sets the particular Aeetes up as an archetypal tyrant. The periphrasis for Apollo self-consciously nods to the fact that he 'always' (*semper*) plays this conventional role in epic and also more specifically serves as a sort of Alexandrian footnote directing the reader's thoughts towards his earliest and most canonical such instantiation, at the opening of the *Iliad*.²⁶ Just as Agamemnon's preoccupation with his kingly privileges leads him to refuse to return a prized object to its rightful owner, regardless of the suffering of those under his power, so does Aeetes', and both are warned by Apollo, as interpreted by his priest.²⁷ In this reboot of *Iliad* 1, someone must be cast as Achilles, and it is Aeetes' half-brother Perses who takes on the role. However, it is at this point that source and target narratives significantly diverge. Though angered, Agamemnon is persuaded by Calchas' warning to send Chryseis back, since 'I myself wish my people to be safe rather than destroyed' (βούλομαι ἐγὼ λαὸν σῶν ἔμμεναι ἢ ἀπολέσθαι, Hom. *Il.* 1.117), and even if Pulleyn ((2000) *ad loc.*) is correct that he says this 'in an attempt to sound statesmanlike, even though we know that he has severe difficulty in acknowledging the importance of any but himself', Aeetes' disregard for his people in word as well as deed nevertheless marks him as an (even) worse Agamemnon. Yet Perses is no better an Achilles. However negative a view of the latter's behaviour after Agamemnon takes Briseis from him we take, his initial motivation is to alleviate the Achaeans' sufferings, and indeed it is Hera's pity which prompts her to put the idea into his mind (*Il.* 1.53–6). Perses' motivation is more ambiguous. Valerius stresses from the start his status as second-in-line to the throne (*ordine regi | proximus*, 5.265–6), the violence of his abuse (*increpitare*, 266) and his immediate support by the people (*sequitur duce turba reperto*, 266). Even if we take as focalised through the enraged Aeetes (and the uncertain text does not help) the idea that Perses is 'now sowing by such deeds

26 The slight parallel of Virg. *Aen.* 4.187 is surely insufficient to justify Wijsman's ((1996) 140) claim that the god is Fama, who does not send *auguria* or *monstra* and does not have a *sacerdos* to interpret her communications.

27 I use 'object' of Chryseis deliberately, since she is reduced to the status of a γέρας. It may be pushing the parallel too far to note the 'golden' quality of both fleece and girl.

hope of power for himself using the fickleness of the people' (*ipsumque ut talibus ausis | spem sibi iam rerum vulgi levitate serentem*, 269–70), the upshot of the episode, compounded by Aeetes' savage beating of his brother, is that Perses does indeed aspire to *regnum*, and civil war is the result. Aeetes the perverted Agamemnon is no less a tyrant, but both his usurper and the mob who support him are tainted with the likelihood of matching him.

As a coda, it is worth returning to the beginning of the poem and considering Pelias' relationship with *his* subjects. Since Jason himself is one of those subjects, the dynamic is rather different from that with the foreign tyrants whom the Argonauts meet on their voyage. The reader would not have the same expectation that the people of Iolcus would share their king's hostility to Jason as with Bebryces or Colchians, and indeed one might not expect the issue to arise at all.²⁸ It does so only briefly, when Jason, seeing through Pelias' deceit in sending him after the Fleece, ponders what action to take:

heu quid agat? populumne levem veterique tyranno
infensum atque olim miserantes Aesona patres
advocet...?

Alas, what should he do? The people, fickle and hostile
to the old tyrant, and the senators, long pitying Aeson,
should he summon them...?

(1.71–3)

Even more than with Perses' rabble-rousing ambitions, this depiction of the people as a fickle mob (*populus levis*) is strongly focalised—indeed here the deliberative subjunctives verge on free indirect discourse—but the very fact that this focalisation is shared by the paranoid tyrant Aeetes and the desperate would-be revolutionary Jason reinforces its prominence in the epic's political worldview. As with Colchis, the reference to the people of Iolcus is juxtaposed with one to its anachronistic senate (*patres* 1.72 ~ 5.269), encouraging the reader even more than usual to read both polities as cyphers or mirrors for the SPQR. The common people of the *Argonautica* may not be as savage or impious as their tyrannical rulers, and indeed they may suffer directly or indirectly from those rulers' self-interested actions, but they can be easily swayed.

28 In Apollonius, the collective speculations of the citizens (ὧς φάσαν ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα κατὰ πτόλιν, 1.247) combine wonder at Pelias' actions and admiration of the Argonauts' prowess (1.242–6), but no obvious sense of approval or disapproval. On Apollonius' Pelias, see Mori (2008) 81–3.

Yet Valerius shows little interest in depicting the body politic for its own sake. He stresses the people's fickleness rather because of its impact on their current and prospective leaders. Characteristically, as we shall see particularly in the case of his monsters, Valerius does not complicate the moral or political picture by making his tyrants more sympathetic, more like heroes than villains. Rather he taints his notional heroes, his Jason, his pseudo-Achilles Perses, with the potential to harness that fickle mob and become tyrants themselves, no different from their mirrors, Pelias and Aeetes. Valerius offers no shades of grey, but overlays his white with an additional coat of black.

Gods, Monsters and the Dark Side of the *Weltenplan*

If Valerius' tyrants are the villainous element of his political schema, it is his monsters which fulfil the same function on the cosmic level. As with his tyrants, Valerius self-consciously draws parallels between his monsters, albeit more intertextually than intratextually, with the same effect of depicting them less as individuals than as instantiations of the almost abstract 'type' of the monster. The clearest, and arguably least subtle, example of this is the simile comparing Amycus to Polyphemus (4.104–9), an equation of epic characters as much as of mythical figures.²⁹ The schematisation of the monstrous giant into a type enables Valerius fully to exploit its significance for his epic's principal binary opposition. Though the conquest of chaos by order can be seen as underlying most epic narratives, and is a particular feature of quest epics in which voyaging heroes civilise barbaric peoples and barbaric lands as they pass, Valerius' *Argonautica* remains exceptional in the extent to which it exploits this motif as its central organising principle. The way that the civilising voyage of the Argo is aligned with the introduction of the Iron Age according to Jupiter's *Weltenplan*, that Gigantomachy both as imagery and as mythological event pervades the poem's fabric, that the Argonauts as representatives and in some cases offspring of Jupiter emblematically overcome the offspring of Neptune and other representatives of the pre-Jovian world order—all this is familiar.³⁰ The function of the Argonauts' antagonists in this scheme is of

29 The parallelism is more subtly reinforced by the intertextuality between Valerius' Dymas and Virgil's Achaemenides, on which see Adamietz (1976) 57–8 n. 61; Hershkovitz (1998b) 78–80.

30 *Weltenplan*: Schubert (1984) 19–44; Feeney (1991) 318–34; Wacht (1991a); Manuwald (1999) 130–76, (2004). Gigantomachy: Feeney (1991) 329–33; Bettenworth (2003); Stover (2012a) 113–50. Jovian v Neptunian: Wacht (1991a) 26–9; Leigh (2010).

central importance to the poem's overall ideology. If Valerius' Neptunian monsters are depicted in unremittingly negative terms, in short as villains, then their defeat and destruction by the Jovian ushers of the new Iron Age will be 'A Good Thing', and thus the transition to that new era equally positive. If their depiction is more complex and thus their defeat less unproblematic, the justification of the conquest, the virtue of the victors and the desirability of the new Iron Age will all be correspondingly problematised. Although one might expect inhuman monsters to be almost by definition abhorrent objects deserving of destruction rather than sympathy, the epic tradition, as we have already seen, markedly and unexpectedly chooses to provoke the reader's sympathy for actual monsters such as Homer's and Virgil's Polyphemus and for monstrous humans such as Mezentius. Valerius gestures towards this tradition, but instead of following it he produces, by astonishing sleight-of-hand, a world-view which leaves his defeated monsters irredeemably monstrous but paradoxically taints their slayers with the same monstrosity.

Valerius' sleight-of-hand resides in the very simple techniques of reversing the narrative sequence in which the reader is exposed to the character's monstrous and sympathetic aspects, and of placing the 'sympathy for the devil' in the partisan voice of the characters' fathers. In Homer and Virgil, the monstrous cannibalism of Polyphemus in both the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* and the inhuman cruelty of Mezentius in the latter (though only vouched for by the hostile Evander) are positioned first, evoking an unequivocally negative and hostile reaction in the reader, only for each to be cast in an unexpectedly and retrospectively sympathetic light by the impartial or hostile narrator's³¹ description of their poignant communion with their beloved animals and, in Mezentius' case, his grief at the death of his son Lausus. The reader's perspective is shifted and she is made to feel that the monster is not as simplistically monstrous as she had previously been encouraged to believe.

Valerius reverses this pattern and produces quite a different effect. Partisan fathers express pity for their sons, who are then shown after all to be every bit as monstrous as more hostile authorities had claimed. Sol's complaint (1.505–29) against the threat which the Argonauts pose to his son Aeetes—who, though not a monster *per se*, is ranged by his Titanic father against the Jovian heroes—is later paralleled by Neptune's lament at the imminent death

31 The fact that Odysseus and Aeneas are the intradiegetic narrators of the Polyphemus episodes is a further complication, but both episodes are part of an extended inset narrative in which their differentiation from the primary narrator is often blurred, and in any case both internal narrators are, unlike Sol and Neptune, hostile to the monster and hence their sympathetic depiction of him carries more credibility.

of his son Amycus (4.114–32).³² In the case of Sol, the dissonant depiction of paternal anxiety on the ‘wrong side’, that opposed to Jupiter and his Argonauts, is significantly juxtaposed with the troubling scene in which Jason gloats over his trickery (*laetusque dolis*, 1.485) in taking partial vengeance on Pelias by persuading Acastus to join the voyage. An unexpectedly sympathetic perspective on both Pelias and Aeetes, coupled with an unsettling view of Jason and Jupiter, is thus produced in short compass. Sol’s speech gains added resonance from two significant intertexts. As a whole, it is a sophisticated variation on and inversion of Venus’ complaint to Jupiter in *Aeneid* 1. Both gods complain to Jupiter about the suffering of their offspring and are answered by a grand prophecy unfolding a *Weltenplan*. Yet while Virgil’s Jupiter offers consolation and reassurance that his grand design will glorify Venus’ descendants, Valerius’ condemns Aeetes and the old world order which he represents to obsolescence and destruction. Aeetes thus stands as an intertextual amalgam of the long-suffering but bound-for-glory Trojans and the Italians whom (in this version of Jupiter’s optimistic prophecy, at least) they will beat down and civilise. Neptune’s speech, as he watches the Argo sail towards Bebrycia, combines the resentful reaction of Virgil’s Juno to the Trojans’ progress in paired speeches in *Aeneid* 1 and 7 with the impotent lament of Juturna for the doomed Turnus. Note especially how Valerius transmutes Juturna’s complaint at the scant recompense from Jupiter for her lost virginity (*haec pro virginitate reponit?*, *Aen.* 12.878) into Neptune’s concession that Amycus’ mother, the nymph Melie, would have been better off losing hers to Jupiter (*infelix imas quondam mihi rapta sub undas | nec potius magno Melie tum mixta Tonanti!* 4.118–19). The combinatorial allusion yokes Juno’s cosmic resentment at the passing of power to the Trojans with Juturna’s private lament at the loss of a loved one.

Yet the depiction of Amycus which follows immediately, as well as the more delayed appearance of Aeetes four books after Sol’s plea, is unremittingly negative, as we have seen in discussing their tyrannical traits. Instead of reassessing her opinion of them, the reader realises just how partial and partisan the divine fathers were. What then is the function of introducing such abortive triggers to sympathy only to nullify their effect? Surely not simply to make the point that even a monster is loved by his daddy? Rather the effect is to make their monstrosity, their villainy, not less extreme, but less absolute. Certainly they are violent and wrathful, but these are not qualities reserved for the morally deprecated enemies of Jupiter. Sol’s and Neptune’s laments offer a glimpse at an epic written by the monstrous losers, one where the blood-soaked fields of Bebrycia

32 Sol: Adamietz (1976) 21–2; Schubert (1984) 25–30; Zissos (2008) 305–12. Neptune: Murgatroyd (2009) 83–5, though I cannot detect the humour he finds in the god’s lament.

can be called 'once happy from their master's contest' (*quondam laetos domini certamine campos*, 4.116), where the death of the impious Orion is a meaningful exemplum of divine injustice (121–3), where Amycus' brutal pugilism is *virtus* (124). Valerius does not make the reader suddenly understand that the monsters are sympathetic within her own value system, but rather that her own value system is not the only one, that epic morality is relative, that it is possible to depict monstrous villains such as Amycus and Aeetes as virtuous heroes. Neptune himself sees the imminent victory of Jupiter and the Argonauts as a result of might rather than right, of 'other strength and greater fates' (*aliae vires maioraque . . . fata*, 4.126–7), the passing of dominion to a newer but no better order. The Titanic perspective of Sol and Neptune leads the reader to reflect whether the Jovian perspective of Jupiter, of the narrator and perhaps even her own values have any absolute validity, or whether, given a different narrator, the heroic valour of Jason, Pollux and the Argonauts could equally be depicted as villainous violence.

Friend or Foe—the Internecine Dimension

Civil war and its domestic analogue, kin-killing, pervade the *Argonautica*.³³ As with the poem's ubiquitous tyrants, this theme, so suited to a *Bellum Civile* or *Thebaid*, is marked and unexpected in a quest epic whose very nature should tend to pit its pioneering heroes against foreign antagonists. Yet almost every conflict within the poem is to a greater or lesser degree internecine and almost every antagonist has some bond of kinship, *amicitia* or ethnicity which problematises the violence used against them. Many examples are large-scale, such as Pelias' fratricidal assault on Aeson, the Lemnian women's massacre of their menfolk, the Argonauts' unwitting war with their ally Cyzicus, and the Colchian civil war, fought between fellow citizens under the command of brothers.³⁴ Yet the taint of an internecine quality is introduced even into the most unexpected and apparently black-and-white conflicts. Sol's plea that Jupiter show mercy to Aeetes, discussed above, stresses how his son abstained from attacking Greece because of Phrixus' marriage to Chalcioppe, so that he considered Greece and its people bound to him by blood (*et generos vocat et iunctas sibi sanguine terras*, 1.524). Aeetes' avoidance of such violence against kin underlines the impious nature of the Argonauts' expedition against him,

33 McGuire (1997) 103–13; Bernstein (2008) 51–4; Stover (2012a) 113–50.

34 Aeson: McGuire (1997) 189–97; Manuwald (2000); Zissos (2009) 354–60. Lemnos: Vessey (1985); Aricò (1991); Elm von der Osten (2007) 18–52. On Cyzicus and Colchis, see below.

tendentiously so for Sol's rhetorical ends, to be sure, but it is not contradicted. Equally tendentious is Laomedon's emphasis on his kinship with Hercules (2.559–62), aimed here at the incidental goal of diminishing Hercules' service as no more than a kinsman's duty, but in a context which so explicitly foreshadows the latter's sack of Troy that this emphasis cannot but taint the assault, justified though it may be by Laomedon's perfidy, with a bitter flavour of kin-killing. Characteristically, Valerius presents two stark, mutually exclusive interpretations, ignoring the grey area in between. The Argonautic expedition against Colchis is not a subtle moral conundrum balancing complex rights and wrongs, but rather a totally justified reclamation of Thessalian property by the imposition of civilised, Greek, Jovian order upon savage, barbarian, Titanic chaos *and at precisely the same time* a totally impious transgression of cosmic boundaries and the bonds of kinship. Hercules' (future) sack of Troy is *both* just punishment of a perfidious tyrant *and* an internecine act of kin-killing. The double perspective matches perfectly the duality of the Iron Age.

Even if we elide the implications of the familial bonds between Thessaly and Colchis, the Argonauts are unquestionably tainted by their involvement in the civil war between Aeetes and Perses.³⁵ It is not only that they take part in the sort of conflict which by its very nature dissolves the distinction between friend and foe, good and evil, hero and villain. Inasmuch as some distinction can be drawn in moral terms between the two sides and those of the Argonauts' natural affinity and interest, it is with Perses that they should be allied, as he himself is in the act of instructing his envoys to tell them when battle breaks out (6.14–30). It was he who had urged the return of the Fleece, an act which indeed was the cause of this very conflict. Aeetes' perfidy following the battle, predicted here by Perses (6.22–3), reinforces the justice of his brother's arguments. In the messy world of the new Iron Age, the clean lines between the virtuous friends one should support and the vicious enemies one should fight are hard to discern, even when they exist at all. By harming their friend and helping their enemy, the Argonauts are fully implicated in the internecine quality of this civil war, not morally detached auxiliaries or mercenaries, but as guilty of blurring battle lines as any Colchian stabbing his fellow citizen, or as Ariasmenus when his scythed chariots slaughter his own men, like the Romans in their own civil war (6.398–409).

Civil war, as amply demonstrated in the epic tradition by Lucan and Statius and outside it throughout imperial prose and verse, in dissolving the distinction between friend and foe, still more dissolves that between hero and villain, justified killer and deserved victim. In keeping with his dual vision of the

35 On the Colchian war, see esp. Schenk (1999) 83–142, 188–212, 228–45; Fucecchi (2006).

Iron Age as one paradoxically of both vigorous progress and impious transgression, Valerius does not dissolve distinctions as comprehensively as Lucan or Statius, but maintains in excruciating tension the competing models of justified conquest and compromised civil war. Such a tension is difficult to sustain, and it has inevitably led critics to privilege one model over the other. Pessimistic readers stress how every attempt at a just war degenerates into internecine conflict, while optimists argue that apparent civil war is shown after all to have clearly defined moral divisions. Among the most interesting of the latter is Stover's recent case for the *Argonautica* as an epic restoration after the *Bellum Civile* to parallel the Flavian political restoration after Nero and 69 CE. Going beyond even Morgan, whose case for 'constructive destruction' in the *Georgics* and *Aeneid* still acknowledges the full horror of civil war as part of the (pseudo-sacrificial) paradox of its regenerative effect,³⁶ Stover argues that, in the Cyzicus episode, where friends and allies unwittingly kill each other, Valerius 'offers his audience a moralized civil war in which strong lines of demarcation exist between heroes and villains, between good and evil, and between the forces of order and chaos'.³⁷ Here Cyzicus himself is an impious *contemptor divum* and his people avatars of the monstrous giants, villains indeed. Stover's close reading of the episode and analysis of its gigantomachic imagery is a tour-de-force, but it ultimately does not, perhaps cannot, justify why the reader should interpret a pseudo-civil war as moralised through being represented as a pseudo-Gigantomachy, in preference to seeing a pseudo-Gigantomachy as perverted by its depiction as a pseudo-civil war. If anything, the linear sequence of the narrative encourages the reader to be swept along by the thrills of gigantomachic battle-narrative, only for her to be pulled up short by the need retrospectively to *reinterpret* it as a civil war. Such a diachronic experience is troped by and focalised through the Argonauts' own *anagnōrisis* (decreed by Jove at the time he considers right, 3.249–53), both of whom they have been fighting and hence of *what* they have done, something unspeakably wicked (*nefas*, 3.258), monstrous deeds (261), which produce a reaction in them like Agave's realisation that she has killed her son Pentheus (264–6).³⁸

36 Morgan (1998), (1999).

37 Stover (2012a) 148. In an appendix to his discussion of Cyzicus (148–50), Stover likewise aligns the Argonauts as 'Jovian Giant-killers' again Perses' forces of 'anti-Jovian Giants'. He acknowledges 'an important exception' (149 n. 93) in Jupiter's son, Colaxes, but does not explain how his interpretation can incorporate it. On Cyzicus, see also Hardie (1993) 87; Manuwald (1999) 11–129; Schenk (1999) esp. 213–28.

38 Stover ((2012a) 124) notes that '[t]he word *nefas* alone is enough to recall Lucan's poetics of civil war', but not that it is positioned so as to cast a retrospective taint over the battle at

However, I do not wish to overprivilege a pessimistic reading of the Cyzicus episode. Rather, the optimistic imagery of Gigantomachy and the pessimistic imagery of civil war are kept in uneasy but perfect balance, the juxtaposition of Valerius' dual worldviews that Jupiter's *Weltenplan* constitutes 'positive historical change' and that it is 'wholly destructive for humankind'.³⁹

Conclusion

Valerius' villains, like so much of his epic, can perhaps be best understood through the lens of the competing programmes set up by the seers Idmon and Mopsus in Book 1. The optimistic and pessimistic interpretations which they respectively offer of the epic, of the expedition and of Jupiter's *Weltenplan* can easily be privileged one over the other by those inclined towards optimism or pessimism.⁴⁰ However, a more fertile approach is to take both prophets and both interpretations as equally valid, despite their being mutually exclusive, since the resulting paradox reflects that of the Iron Age, movement of civilising progress and corrupting decline.⁴¹ As part of this double vision, Valerius' villains and antagonists do not display the moral complexity of a Hector, a Turnus or even a Mezentius, which synecdochises the moral complexity of their worlds. Nor does the epic depict absolute villains who can be justifiably destroyed by absolutely virtuous heroes. It does not even present the moral chaos of Lucan and Statius, where everyone is a villain, though this is the scenario to which it comes closest. Valerius' villains are totally villainous and without redeeming features, Saturnian monsters and Neronian tyrants, set in stark opposition to

Cyzicus. Curiously, he does not discuss the Agave simile at all, though Pentheus' status as a *contemptor divum* would nicely tally with Stover's depiction of Cyzicus. Neither Pentheus' nor Cyzicus' impiety, however, can totally outweigh the horror of kin- or ally-killing.

39 Respectively Stover (2012a) 148 and Davis (2010) 11.

40 Thus Galli ((2007) 150) asserts that '[l]'antitesi tra i due *vates* è nettamente accentuata da Valerio in senso favorevole a Idmone', while Zissos ((2004b) 33) claims that Idmon's prophecy is exposed as 'a sham'. More neutrally: 'Die Prophezeiungen von Mopsus und Idmon verhalten sich zueinander wie These und Antithese', Lefèvre (1991) 177. Cf. Buckley (2006) 28 for a generic dimension (Idmon epic, Mopsus tragic), and Feeney (1991) 316 for their presentation of 'two quite different visions of the epic experience'.

41 '[T]he Flavian *Argonautica* simultaneously posits and exasperates the conventional paradigms of ethical judgment—namely, primitivism and progressivism—that inform the ancient literary debate', Zissos (2006a) 79. Cf. Feeney (1991) 330–2 for the complexity of the Iron Age in Valerius, following the tradition of the *Georgics*, *Odes* 1.3 and Seneca's *Medea*.

the Jovian heroism of the Argonauts, but at exactly the same time they are evil twins, embodiments of an order which is different but no better than that of the new Iron Age. As with so many other Roman epics, the boundary-dissolving quality of internecine conflict, be it kin-killing or civil war, contributes to this moral confusion. Valerius' remarkable achievement is to paint his villains as black as can be, but still render his readers uncomfortable at the victory of his heroes. How his depiction of the death of Absyrtus would have further affected them remains unknown and unknowable. Absyrtus' sister Medea, heroine and villainess in one, deserves and receives a chapter of her own.⁴²

42 See Davis in this volume, and Zissos (2012).

PART 4

Latin Intertexts



Virgilian Prophecy and the Reign of Jupiter in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Randall T. Ganiban

Introduction

Prima deum magnis canimus freta pervia natis | fatidicamque ratem... ('I sing of the straits first traversed by the gods' great sons and of the fate-speaking ship...'; Val. Fl. 1.1–2).¹ So begins Valerius Flaccus' epic on Jason and the Argonauts in words that constitute an important literary-historical declaration: while Valerius' older contemporary Lucan had recently composed his historical epic *Bellum Civile*, which did away with a traditional divine machinery, the *Argonautica* both reincorporates a world inhabited by gods (cf. *deum... natis*) and employs a fully articulated divine dimension governed by fate (cf. *fatidicamque ratem*).² To do so, Valerius looked back not only to his Greek model in Apollonius Rhodius but also to other poets, Virgil foremost of all.

The extent of Valerius' reconstituted divine machinery is on full display in Book 1. After Jason accepts his uncle Pelias' treacherous and seemingly impossible challenge to sail to Colchis to retrieve the Golden Fleece, the Argo (the world's first ship) is built under the guidance of the goddess Minerva, and a crew is recruited by Juno (1.91–9). But before the Argonauts depart, Valerius portrays a divine council about the expedition, featuring an exchange between Jupiter and the sun god Sol. This episode is a striking Valerian innovation. No such scene exists in Apollonius' *Argonautica*.³ Although Valerius' models go back to appeals to Zeus in Homer (Thetis' in *Iliad* 1 and Athena's in *Odyssey* 1), the most important intertext is Venus' interaction with Jupiter in *Aeneid* 1, which results in the epic's foundational prophecy.⁴ Valerius' use and transformation of the Virgilian episode thus raises our expectations of its potential significance for interpreting the *Argonautica*. At the same time, it displays

1 I have used the Latin text of Ehlers (1980); the translations are my own.

2 The ship's 'fate-speaking' ability is displayed at 1.302–8. See e.g. Manuwald (2013) 36–7.

3 See e.g. Hershkowitz (1998b) 241 and Stover (2012a) 29.

4 See e.g. Spaltenstein (2002) *ad* 1.498 and Kleywegt (2005) 289–90.

Valerius' frequent intertextual practice of adopting the structure of Virgilian scenes but transforming their thematic or ideological meaning.⁵

In this chapter, I will argue that Valerius' Jupiter offers a worldview that rejects a Virgilian outlook (despite the Virgilian framework employed), revises standard ideological interpretations of the Argonautic expedition (and navigation more generally) as either progress or crime, and makes moral ideals subservient to political supremacy. As we shall also see, Valerius' choice of Sol as interlocutor in this episode contributes significantly to the characterisation of Jupiter, his regime and its values.

Introducing the Council of the Gods

Just after the Argonauts set off on their journey, the reader is transported to the realm of the gods, where a divine council takes place:

Siderea tunc arce pater pulcherrima Graium
coepta tuens tantamque operis consurgere molem
laetatur; patrii neque enim probat otia regni. 500
una omnes gaudent superi venturaque mundo
tempora quaeque vias cernunt sibi crescere Parcae.

Then gazing from his heavenly citadel at the extremely splendid endeavours of the Greeks and how vast an enterprise begins, the Father is delighted; for he does not approve of the ease of his father's rule. With him all the gods above delight in the ages coming to the world, as do the Fates who perceive the paths to them growing.

(1.498–502)

As is generally noted, Valerius skilfully sets up Virgil as a structural model: after the Trojans have been shipwrecked in Carthage in *Aeneid* 1, Jupiter is also shown gazing down from the heights of heaven (*aethere summo*, *Aen.* 1.223; *siderea... arce*, Val. Fl. 1.498) upon the ships at sea (*mare velivolum*, *Aen.* 1.224; *tantamque operis... molem*, Val. Fl. 1.499, i.e. the Argo). Other Virgilian influences enrich Valerius' passage. *tantam... operis consurgere molem* (1.499) echoes *tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem* ('It was such a great effort

5 For the relationship between Virgil and Valerius, see e.g. Nordera (1969); Hardie (1993) *passim*; Barnes (1995); Schimann (1998); and especially Zissos (2008) xxxiv–xxxix and Heerink (forthcoming a).

to found the Roman race' *Aen.* 1.33), the culmination of the introduction to the *Aeneid*, expressing the teleological scope of the epic.⁶ In addition, when Valerius explains that Jupiter has introduced navigation because he did not like the *otia* of his father Saturn's reign (1.500), another Virgilian context is in play: the famous theodicy of Virgil's *Georgics* 1.118–46.⁷ There we are told that Jupiter introduced *labor* into his regime, thereby forcing humankind to develop agriculture,⁸ which was not needed during his father Saturn's reign of abundance.⁹

With such Virgilian intertexts comes the expectation that Valerius' Jupiter, like his counterpart in *Aeneid* 1, will also provide a long-term prophecy—one that is teleological in scope and foresees human progress.¹⁰ Indeed, the fact that Valerius' Jupiter rejoices (*laetatur*, 500) in the incipient Argonautic expedition, as do the *superi* more generally (*una omnes gaudent superi*, 501), reinforces the idea that a larger divine plan is unfolding.

But then Valerius introduces a note of dissonance in lines 501–2. The syntax is notoriously difficult: of particular debate is whether *venturaque . . . tempora* is governed by *gaudent* or *cernunt* (i.e. whether it reflects the perspective of the *superi* or the *Parcae*).¹¹ Either way, the sentence ends with the idea that the initiation of sailing with the Argonautic expedition will bring about additional modes of death. This detail intimates a critical view of navigation (and thus the Argo's mission) as a negative development because it entails increased human mortality;¹² it is also a view explicitly voiced, for example, later by Boreas (1.597–607) and Neptune (1.642–50).

6 See e.g. Kleywegt (2005) *ad loc.* For the line as a statement of literary ambition, see Feeney (1991) 318 with n. 16.

7 E.g. Schubert (1984) 24; Feeney (1991) 319, 330; Wacht (1991a) 4–7; Barnes (1995) 273; Kleywegt (2005) *ad loc.*

8 Groß (2003) 21 assumes that the exertion of *labor* in Valerius will also involve the exhibition of *virtus*, although this beneficial aspect of the mission is not literally stated by Jupiter in his prophecy in Book 1. See also Stover (2012a) 53. On the heroic and Virgilian language in this passage, see Feeney (1991) 318–19 with n. 16.

9 Jason, without any direct divine knowledge, had voiced such an idea at 1.246–7, on which see e.g. Feeney (1991) 330 and Manuwald (2009) 591.

10 Though see O'Hara (1990) 128–63 on deceptive aspects of the Virgilian Jupiter's speech.

11 For the textual difficulties of lines 501–2, see e.g. discussions in Spaltenstein (2002); Kleywegt (2005); Zissos (2008).

12 See e.g. Groß (2003) 21, who refers to Adamietz (1976) 21 and Otte (1992) 48. Increased mortality is also a traditional characteristic of the Iron Age. See e.g. Hes. *Op.* 90–2; Hor. *Carm.* 1.3.32–3; Sen. *Med.* 338–9 with Feeney (1991) 330 and n. 58.

Thus Valerius initially melds the teleological/progressive aspect of Jupiter's regime from Virgil with the interpretation of the Argonautic voyage as human achievement, but he then hints at a conflicting view—that navigation is a potential bane for humankind.¹³ The resulting dissonance will be a defining element of the ensuing divine council.

The Status and Complaints of Sol

Despite the rejoicing of the *superi* (501), the sun god is unhappy about the Argonautic expedition and complains to Jupiter. Sol's speech (505–27) is modelled especially on that of Venus to Jupiter in *Aeneid* 1. In both cases, a parent expresses concern about a son's safety (Venus for Aeneas; Sol for Aeetes) and raises questions about the causes of events on earth (*Aen.* 1.231–41, 250–3; Val. Fl. 1.507–8, 517–24); in response, both Jupiters offer a revelation of fate (*Aen.* 1.257–96; Val. Fl. 1.531–60). However, there are important innovations in Valerius' adaptation of the scene; perhaps most significant is the intriguing relationship between Sol and Jupiter.

Unlike Virgil's Venus (Jupiter's daughter), Sol has a more complicated familial history with the king of the gods. Sol is a Titan, usually identified as the son of Cronus' brother Hyperion;¹⁴ throughout the *Argonautica*, he is referred to as *Sol*, *Titan* and (perhaps) *Hyperion*.¹⁵ In the mythographical tradition, Sol/Helios seems to have aided the Olympians when attacked by the Titans and the Giants,¹⁶ and was therefore not imprisoned, as were many other Titans, including Cronus/Saturn and Iapetus.¹⁷ Indeed, Sol continues his role as sun god in the Olympian regime. Yet, in a poem (and divine council) in which the overthrow of Saturn and the Titans (cf. *patrii regni*, 1.500 above; 563–5) and Jupiter's new world plan are so important (cf. 1.498–500 above; 533–60), the status and use of Sol as the primary recipient of Jupiter's prophecy adds an innovative dimension to Valerius' divine politics. Sol is a liminal figure, a remnant of an

13 For the conflict between 'primitive' and 'progressivist' approaches in Book 1, particularly in the Boreas episode that follows the divine council, see Zissos (2006a) 81–4 and *passim*.

14 Sometimes, however, he is identified as Hyperion himself (and thus Cronus'/Saturn's brother).

15 E.g. *Sol* at 1.274, 504; 8.350; *Titan* at 2.37, 57; his chariot is called *Hyperionius* at 2.34, and *Aeetes Hyperionide* at 5.471.

16 E.g. Ap. Rhod. 3.221–2; Diodorus Siculus 5.71.2; Ps.-Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.35.

17 Hom. *Il.* 8.479–81, where they no longer enjoy the rays of Helios.

overthrown generation of gods who still has a function in the new regime, but whose family continues to suffer from Jupiter's reign.

Sol begins in somewhat flattering and subservient terms:

summe sator, cui nostra dies volventibus annis
tot peragit reficitque vices . . .

Supreme creator, for whom my daylight, as the years roll round, finishes
and renews so many interchanges . . .

(1.505–6)

The address of Jupiter as *summe sator* ('supreme creator') is a periphrasis not earlier attested for the king of the gods, but perhaps with special resonance here. Saturn's name was derived by Varro from *sero* ('sow', 'beget') and thus connected with *sator*.¹⁸ Jupiter had been addressed as *sator* in Pacuvius and Virgil.¹⁹ However, since just three lines earlier we heard of Saturn's reign (*patrii . . . regni*), the presence of the title *summe sator* (with the epithet *summe* unattested earlier with the noun)²⁰ might underscore Sol's rhetorical acceptance of Jupiter's supreme position over Saturn. Moreover, Sol describes his unending service to Jupiter somewhat obsequiously: *cui nostra dies volventibus annis | tot peragit reficitque vices* (505–6). Sol may have been incorporated into Jupiter's regime, but his language underscores his secondary status among the Olympians.

Perhaps as a symptom of his non-Olympian identity, Sol does not seem to have a good understanding of Jupiter's overall plan. He starts by asking if the Argonautic expedition is something Jupiter has sanctioned (1.505–8). This basic question itself places him in contrast with his Virgilian model Venus, who is already familiar with the general outline of Jupiter's plan and her descendants' fate (*Aen.* 1.234–7). The Virgilian model also adds force to another important Valerian detail: whereas Virgil's Venus complains about things that have already happened (i.e. Juno's tormenting and shipwreck of Aeneas),²¹ Sol is

18 Varro, *LL* 5.64. See Galinsky (1996) 95; O'Hara (1990) 270.

19 Jupiter is *aeternum humanum sator* in Pacuvius (Ribbeck fr. 295); *hominum sator atque deorum* at *Aen.* 1.254 and 11.725. In Valerius, Jupiter is described as *sator* only once more (2.561).

20 Though also at Statius, *Theb.* 3.488.

21 Cf. also *Odyssey* 1, where Athena complains about the treatment of Odysseus; *Iliad* 1, where Thetis complains about outrages already committed against Achilles.

motivated by fear for what *might happen* as a result of Jupiter's rule. And fear, as we shall see, is a defining component of Jupiter's regime.

Despite his initial rhetorical subservience to Jupiter, Sol still challenges the morality and justice of Jupiter's plans by asking about the fairness of the Argonauts' threat to Colchis: *quid Minyae meruere queri?* ('What can the Minyans complain about?', 519). As Sol claims, Aeetes has done nothing to anger the Greeks; on the contrary, he had settled in a far-off land, welcomed the Greek Phrixus into his realm, and had even given him a share in power (517–24). Aggression against Aeetes would thus seem unwarranted.²²

With these words, Sol's function as a speaking character in the epic ends. Jupiter and his Olympian regime, as we shall see, will exhibit little compassion or regard for this Titan and his concerns.

Jupiter's Prophecy

Valerius includes three lines describing divine reactions to Sol's speech, with Mars supporting the sun god, while Venus and Juno stand in opposition (1.528–30). Jupiter then responds with the longest speech in the epic, and in it he provides his worldview. As with earlier parts of the episode, *Aeneid* 1 provides the decisive model. However, Jupiter's differing responses to Venus (in Virgil) and Sol (in Valerius) are telling and help underscore fundamental differences between the epics with respect to his worldview, the moral basis of his regime, and his interaction with other gods.

The contrasts are immediately apparent. To his daughter Venus in the *Aeneid*, Jupiter is consoling. He lightly kisses her, tells her *parce metu* ('refrain from fear', *Aen.* 1.257), and reveals the unchangeable mandates of fate (*Aen.* 1.257–96) that will ultimately benefit her son and family through the rise of Rome, particularly under Augustus. To her Valerian counterpart Sol, however, Jupiter responds somewhat brusquely and without consolation, simply making clear that events are unfolding according to fate:

Tum genitor: 'vetera haec nobis et condita pergunt
ordine cuncta suo rerumque a principe cursu
fixa manent.'

22 Kleywegt (2005) *ad loc.* Sol does end his appeal, however, by mentioning the suffering he has already experienced from the death of his son Phaethon (526–7), who ultimately was killed by Jupiter's thunderbolt (though this point is tactfully omitted), as described in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.

Then the Father: 'All these things, long-established and instituted by me, proceed in their proper order and remain fixed from the original course of things.'

(1.531–3)

Jupiter's phrasing is Virgilian²³ but seems a bit misleading or perhaps even insulting when made to a Titan. Jupiter's plans concerning navigation and the Argo, we have already been told (see above), came about only *after* the defeat of Saturn/Cronus and the Titans (i.e. Sol's 'family'), making *vetera* and *rerum a principe cursu fixa* somewhat strained. Moreover, these lines initiate Jupiter's revelation of fate and his worldview, both of which will offer no good news or comfort to the sun god.

Jupiter declares that the long-standing domination of the East/Colchis will come to an end, and that his decision to open the seas to sailing will bring about international conflict: not only Jason's winning of the Golden Fleece but ultimately Paris' abduction of Helen and the Trojan War, which will allow Greece to dominate the world (542–54). His language describing these events is significant. In 546–54, Jupiter goes on to reveal the extinction of the power of Sol's family in the East in contrast to the Trojan rebirth prophesied in his Virgilian model. Jupiter's indifference to Sol's concerns is further suggested in the pointed use of *dies*. Sol had expressed his service to Jupiter in terms of *nostra dies* (505, see above). Jupiter, however, transforms the meaning of *dies* in discussing the fall of the East: *accelerat sed summa dies Asiamque labantem | linquimus* ('but the final day rushes forth and we leave tottering Asia', 542–3). Here *summa dies* indicates the final day of the East's (and thus Colchis') dominance. The force of *summa dies* intensifies because of its Virgilian intertext in *Aeneid* 2: upon encountering Aeneas while Troy is being sacked, the Trojan priest Panthus says *venit summa dies* ('The final day has come', *Aen.* 2.324), and explains that the fall of Troy is part of Jupiter's plan. Jupiter's metaliterary skill and disdain for Sol and his family in the East are striking.²⁴

The outlook for humankind more generally is no better. Jupiter is explicit about the suffering his plan will cause humans: the violence of the Trojan War (549–52), as well as the numerous mortals and demigods who will die as

23 See e.g. Kleywegt (2005) *ad loc.* and Zissos (2008) *ad loc.*

24 For the intertext, see e.g. Barnes (1981) 360–1; Spaltenstein (2002) *ad loc.*; and especially Stover (2012a) 33–7, who interprets the passage also in relation to Lucan 7.195 but comes to a different conclusion.

Asia succumbs to fate (553–4).²⁵ Jupiter thus both reinforces his own claim at 545–6 that with navigation ‘a path has been made through billows and through storms for you, Bellona’ (*via facta per undas | perque hiemes, Bellona, tibi*), and confirms Valerius’ earlier detail at 501 that the Parcae see an increase of human mortality because of Jupiter’s plans. Indeed nowhere in 546–54 does Jupiter describe how the war might be beneficial to humankind—e.g. as a vehicle through which warriors might achieve human greatness.²⁶ Rather he expresses a desire primarily for conflict to determine international dominance.²⁷ Once again, Valerius has activated a Virgilian intertext whose ideological force he does not incorporate into Jupiter’s divine plan.

Yet, while Valerius might seem to provide a fate as forward-looking as that in Virgil,²⁸ there are important differences. As Jupiter goes on to reveal, Greek domination will not be permanent:

hinc Danaum de fine sedet gentesque fovebo	555
mox alias. pateant montes silvaeque lacusque	
cunctaque claustra maris, spes et metus omnibus esto.	
arbiter ipse locos terrenaque summa movendo	
experiar, quatenam populis longissima cunctis	
regna velim linquamque datas ubi certus habenas.	560

Thereafter I have decided upon the fall of the Greeks, and I will soon favour other races. Let the mountains, woods, lakes and all the barriers of the sea lie open; let hope and fear be to all. I myself as arbiter, by shifting the highest power on earth, shall make trial of which empire I want to last longest for all peoples and where I may with confidence leave the reins once given.

(1.555–60)

25 See Parkes (2009a) for the passage’s potential influence on Statius’ *Achilleid*, and their joint use of Catullus 64. See also Parkes in this volume on Valerius and Statius’ *Achilleid*.

26 Many scholars, however, assume that Valerius’ Jupiter endorses a progressive sense of *labor*. However, Valerius’ Jupiter in his prophecy does not ever explicitly convey this idea. See discussions in Davis (1989) 63 and Manuwald (2009) 591.

27 Jupiter introduces the issue of a nation’s reputation (*nomen*, 1.540) through domination but does not mention particular virtues or progressive ideals.

28 Cf. Manuwald (2013) 50, who sees a Stoic aspect to the world plan Valerius’ Jupiter has established.

Jupiter thus prophesies the ultimate fall of Greece and the rise of other peoples (555–6).²⁹ The introduction of sailing will open all regions of the world to conflict, as a result of which Jupiter will be able to decide the various nations on which he will bestow future world dominance (556–60). For most readers, the phrase *gentes . . . alias* (555–6) alludes to the Romans, who historically do dominate the world after defeating Greece in the second century BCE. Consequently Jupiter's prophecy here (like his prophecy in Virgil) would tie the mythological world of Jason and the Argonauts to the (near) historical present of Rome, and Valerius' prophecy would also construct a long-term teleological perspective.³⁰

But here we should be careful. Valerius' Jupiter never explicitly mentions Rome (even if the allusion seems overpowering to the reader),³¹ and *alias gentes* itself could refer to multiple nations.³² Valerius has seemingly made his Jupiter—despite the Virgilian model—silent on Rome as *the* (or even *a*) successor to Greek domination. Moreover, Valerius' Jupiter claims that he, as *arbiter*, will make decisions about later shifts in world power, as he tests the peoples of the world to determine where dominance will last the longest (558–60). Thus, from Jupiter's perspective in the *Argonautica*, there is quite literally no set fate expressed in the text that guides the world towards Roman (not to mention Flavian)³³ hegemony. Valerius has composed a passage that would initially and intertextually seem to lead to a similar teleological point of view as in Virgil but that, in the end, not only frustrates such expectations but even omits direct mention of Rome.

Valerius' transformation of Jupiter's prophecy from the *Aeneid* is thus startling. The Virgilian Jupiter's prophecy can be read as not simply about the success of a nation but also about the moral virtues that it and its people will embody. Valerius avoids investing such meaning in his *Argonautica*. Although he prefaced the episode (498–502) by suggesting that some kind of moral or beneficial ideal was involved in the introduction of sailing and Jupiter's new regime, the god's prophecy itself offers only war and the transfer

29 For the general shift of power from East to West, see e.g. Adamietz (1976) 22; Burck (1979a) 233; Schubert (1984) 34–7; Wacht (1991a) 9–11; Kleywegt (2005) *ad loc.*; Zissos (2008) *ad loc.*

30 For this view, see e.g. Schönberger (1965) 125; Burck (1979a) 232; Barnes (1981) 361; Taylor (1994) 220; Groß (2003); Stover (2012a) 28–30.

31 See discussions of the pointed omission of Rome despite the Virgilian model in Adamietz (1976) 22–3; Barnes (1981) 361–3, 369–70; Schubert (1984) 37–9; Davis (1989) 63–4; Barnes (1995) 274; Lefèvre (2004) 135.

32 Cf. Pythagoras' speech at Ovid, *Met.* 15.431–52, where Rome's eternal domination is made unclear in a world of incessant change. See Hardie (1993) 95.

33 This absence would potentially weaken the significance of a connection between the Argonauts and Vespasian in 1.7–21; cf. Stover (2012a) 62–70.

of international power.³⁴ Valerius' Jupiter does not explicitly express positive, moral or beneficial ideals that will underpin his regime or the transfer of human power among various nations.³⁵

The *Argonautica*'s resulting vision of the world and its concept of fate thus differ from that in the *Aeneid*. Virgil's Jupiter had at least suggested a separation (though not unproblematic throughout the epic) between himself and fate; that fate is determined separately from Jupiter but it is his role to uphold it. In contrast, Valerius' Jupiter begins his prophecy by stating that he himself had determined fate, when he had no descendants on earth and therefore possessed *iusti facultas* ('power of acting with justice', 533–5). However, as we learn at 558–60, he has not made determinations about world domination past Greece's fall; rather he indicates that such decisions will depend on his sole judgement as *arbiter* (558–60). But can he possibly have the same objectivity and *iusti facultas* then, when he will have mortal descendants? The moral uncertainty is compounded by Jupiter's silence on the criteria or values on which he will base his future judgements concerning those nations that will come to dominate the world, and whether this future will be beneficial for humankind. What kind of world does he ultimately foresee?

In some ways, Jupiter perfectly encapsulates the character of his reign when, in the midst of his revelation that the world is now open to conflict, he declares, *spes et metus omnibus esto* (1.557). The phrase seems an allusion to an important passage in Lucan in which the poet addresses his readers and describes the hope and fear (*spesque metusque*, 7.211) that they will feel as they re-experience the destruction of Rome, while simultaneously entertaining the hope that the destruction might still be avoided.³⁶ As Tim Stover argues, Jupiter's *spes et metus* in Valerius, when read against Lucan, injects the possibility of hope, and a relatively positive worldview results when compared to that of Lucan (though with some ambivalence, since fear will still be present). The Argonauts' story would thus resonate with the era of expansion and renewal during the reign of the emperor Vespasian.³⁷

But if we understand the phrase against the primary model of *Aeneid* 1 as well, I believe we see a different picture. Not only does Valerius avoid providing a fully teleological and progressive view of Jupiter's plan/fate, but he also does

34 A '“Darwinian” process of selection', as Zissos (2008) 321 puts it; cf. also Schubert (1984) 38–9.

35 Indeed Billerbeck (1986) 3130 argues that Jupiter's plan is not central for the *Argonautica*.

36 See e.g. Stover (2012a) 38–40 on this allusion.

37 Stover (2012a). Cf. also Taylor (1994) and Barnes (1995) 274–5.

not establish any moral ideals as the foundation of the god's vision.³⁸ Moreover, Jupiter's proclamation of continual strife motivated by *spes et metus* runs the risk of further destabilising this world. In an epic in which Jupiter never fully communicates his plan to mortals³⁹ and even punishes those who (like Prometheus and Phineus) try to do so,⁴⁰ humans are left in a quandary about what is right. Furthermore, their dilemma is exacerbated by the fact that fear so often seems to overpower hope in influencing action.⁴¹ Indeed, in Book 1, fear is a prime motivator not just for mortals,⁴² but also for the gods—giving full force to *omnibus* in *spes et metus omnibus esto* (557): Sol approaches Jupiter not quite to complain about what has already happened (as in e.g. *Aeneid* 1, *Iliad* 1 and *Odyssey* 1) but out of fear (*metuens*, 509) of the regime's world plans and what they entail for his son Aeetes.

Heroism and Heredity

Jupiter concludes his speech to Sol by gazing towards the sea and uttering encouragement to the heroes:

tunc oculos Aegaea refert ad caerula robur
 Herculeum Ladaeque tuens genus atque ita fatur:
 'tendite in astra, viri: me primum regia mundo
 Iapeti post bella trucidis Phlegraeque labores
 imposuit; durum vobis iter et grave caeli 565
 institui. sic ecce meus, sic orbe peracto
 Liber et expertus terras remeavit Apollo.'

Then he turns back his eyes to the blue Aegean, and, gazing at the strength of Hercules and the children of Leda, speaks thus: 'Strive for the

38 Cf. Lefèvre (2004) 135: Jupiter 'verkörpert keine moralische Instanz, sondern ist mit dem Prinzip des mechanischen Wechsels zufrieden'.

39 See Manuwald (2009) and (2013).

40 For the case of Prometheus, see Murgatroyd (2009) *ad* 4.36–7 (Prometheus); for Phineus, see Manuwald (2009) 597–607.

41 For example, on a stylistic/dictional level, words formed from *metu-* occur 67 times, *terror/terreo* 16 times. By contrast, *spes/sper*-words occur only 47 times, with a number of these cases indicating that *spes* seems lost, absent, receding, doubted or deceptive (e.g. 2.381; 3.183, 542, 555; 4.43, 300; 5.526, 679; 7.539, 628; 8.272, 435).

42 E.g. in Book 1, Pelias is a *longus metus* to his people (1.23); Jason is a cause of *metus* to Pelias (1.31–2); Jason fears for his family (1.693); Jason's parents fear for him (1.733–4).

stars, heroes: kingship first imposed me over the world after the wars of savage Iapetus and the labours of Phlegra; for you I have established a hard and burdensome path to heaven. Thus did my Liber, after traversing the world, thus did my Apollo, after experiencing earthly existence, come back to heaven.'

(1.561–7)

To be more specific, Jupiter explicitly gazes at (*tuens*) and addresses *only* Hercules (*robor Herculeum*) and the brothers Castor and Pollux (*Ledae...genus*). He urges them to strive for the stars (*tendite in astra, viri*, 1.563), emphasising the hard work needed to attain apotheosis/catasterism.⁴³ This apostrophe comes as somewhat of a surprise. Given that the *Argonautica* is a poem about Jason and the Argonauts, and that the role of the quest for the Golden Fleece in world history has just been prophesied, we might have expected Jupiter to encourage Jason (the leader of the expedition) or to call for the overall success of the mission. Many readers account for this perhaps unexpected focus by arguing that, in addressing these three men, Jupiter is really addressing all the Argonauts, motivating them all to strive for greatness.⁴⁴ But even if this is an attractive solution, the fact still remains that Valerius did not have his Jupiter literally do this. As we shall see, the selection of these three heroes and the mythological exempla used to encourage them are carefully chosen and fundamentally participate in Jupiter's worldview, despite the relatively limited roles these men actually play in the quest for the Golden Fleece.

Hercules is a compelling but complicated exemplum for the other Argonauts. He joined the expedition already famous from his former exploits (cf. 1.34–6), and performs the heroic act of freeing the princess Hesione at the end of Book 2. But he embodies a type of heroism seemingly alternative to that represented by Jason: whereas Hercules is a hero of *virtus*, Jason must rely on the magic of a lovelorn girl to succeed in his heroic tasks.⁴⁵ Moreover, Hercules leaves the Argonautic expedition by the end of Book 3, as he wanders in pursuit of his comrade Hylas. Hercules appears later in the epic, but his further adventures are separate from those of the Argonauts—most importantly, he will free the Titan Prometheus from his horrifying punishment on the Caucasus

43 For the catasterisms of all three men, see Zissos (2008) *ad* 1.563–7.

44 Cf. Feeney (1991) 333–4; Wacht (1991a) 18; Groß (2003) 29; Kleywegt (2005); Stover (2012a) 53 n. 16 (who suggests that all humans are in effect being addressed).

45 See e.g. 7.438–9 with Feeney (1991) 320. For later similes comparing Jason to Hercules, see 5.486–7 and 8.125–6 with Feeney (1991) 334 and Ripoll (1998) 91–4.

Mountains (5.154–76).⁴⁶ Hercules' ultimate apotheosis (after the *Argonautica*) will have little to do with the quest for the Golden Fleece.⁴⁷

The brothers Castor and Pollux might also seem surprising heroes for Jupiter to highlight. Castor commits no especially remarkable act of heroism in the first half of the *Argonautica*,⁴⁸ and is mentioned individually only in two brief episodes in its second half, when he bears a message to the Argonauts from Jason (5.546–57), and fights during the civil war at Colchis (6.204–55). Pollux is more successful. He slays several of the Doliones at 3.191–7 and defeats the monstrous Amycus in a boxing match in Book 4, but even Pollux is mentioned individually only once in Books 5–8 (8.245).⁴⁹ In the larger mythological tradition, the brothers participate in a number of other heroic events, largely as 'standard figures', though their main exploits are three: 'their recovery of Helen from Athens (or Aphidna) after Theseus has abducted her, their own abduction of the Leucippides... and their battle with Idas and Lynceus...'.⁵⁰ Their ultimate immortality is not closely connected to the Argonautic myth. Indeed, in some sources Castor only reaches divine status because his brother decides to share his own immortality.⁵¹

The three heroes would therefore seem perhaps unexpected Argonauts for Jupiter to address, if they did not share one important characteristic—they are all sons of Jupiter: Hercules by Alcmene, Castor and Pollux by Leda.⁵² By apostrophising these figures in particular, Jupiter may reveal his stronger and more dominant concern: to promote his sons/descendants who ultimately do become gods, with the Argonauts' actual success at Colchis and its possible ideological significance as progress or crime of much less concern.

Equally noteworthy in the apostrophe are the exempla that Jupiter draws from his own life to spur on his three mortal sons (1.563–5; translated above):

46 Heerink (forthcoming a) argues: 'Aeneas-like Hercules is removed from the epic, and the god's chances of being honoured with an *Aeneid* are gone'.

47 See Gantz (1993) 463. At Diodorus Siculus 4.10.7, Hercules' immortality is bestowed because of his labours; at Pind. *Nem.* 1.67–72, because of his role in the Gigantomachy. See also Castelletti in this volume.

48 After almost striking his brother Pollux, Castor does slay Itys during the disastrous battle against the Doliones (3.186–90).

49 Castor and Pollux are also referred to together as *Tyndaridas* (5.367). Also in 3.187.

50 Gantz (1993) 324.

51 Cf. Hom. *Od.* 11.301–4; Pind. *Nem.* 10.54–61. Zissos (2008) *ad* 563–7 also notes that 'Hercules, the Dioscuri, and Bacchus are stock examples of those who won a place in heaven through earthly striving (cf. e.g. Hor. *C.* 4.8.29–34)'.

52 Valerius indicates at 1.432, 5.572 that Castor and Pollux are Jupiter's sons, though they are also referred to as *Tyndarides*. See n. 49 above.

me primum regia mundo
Iapeti post bella trucidis Phlegraeque labores
imposuit.

The phrase *Iapeti post bella trucidis* refers to the Titanomachy, the war between the Titans (Iapetus was one of the Titans)⁵³ and the Olympian gods, while *Phlegraeque labores* describes the Gigantomachy, the war in which the Giants attempted to overthrow the Olympians on the fields of Phlegra. Jupiter uses these exempla not to characterise the Argonautic expedition as a progressive and beneficial endeavour (comparable to his own achievements),⁵⁴ but to elucidate the struggle his sons will have to endure before they attain apotheosis, as he makes clear in 1.565–7.⁵⁵ Given that neither war makes Jupiter a god, for he is already one, these exempla provide inexact models for Hercules, Castor and Pollux. But they do involve central preoccupations of Jupiter: these wars involved threats to his own power and that of the Olympian gods, but through his victories in them he confirmed his supreme position in the cosmos.⁵⁶ Even as Jupiter encourages his three sons (within a larger dialogue with Sol about the Argonautic expedition), his thoughts are preoccupied with his own supreme political power.

Jupiter ends his apostrophe by stating that he made (*institui*) the path to divinity difficult for his three mortal sons,⁵⁷ but then surprisingly adds the exempla of two current gods, also his sons,⁵⁸ for whom he did the same (1.565–7; translated above):

durum vobis iter et grave caeli
institui. sic ecce meus, sic orbe peracto
Liber et expertus terras remeavit Apollo.

53 By using *Iapetus* instead of his brother Cronus (Jupiter's father), Jupiter perhaps obscures that he overthrew his own father, while simultaneously justifying the war because Iapetus (like the other Titans) was 'savage' (*trux*, 565).

54 So e.g. Feeney (1991) 333 and Zissos (2008) *ad loc.*

55 See below. And again note that Jupiter is literally only addressing his three sons, not the Argonauts, a detail that makes a progressive characterisation of the overall expedition more difficult.

56 For the Gigantomachic imagery in Book 1, see Zissos (2006a) 80.

57 *vobis* (565) must indicate Jupiter's three mortal sons, whom he is addressing (see above).

58 Bacchus was his son by Semele, and Apollo by Leto. Zissos (2008) *ad* 1.563–7 notes that Wacht (1991a) 21 and Otte (1992) 'argue for reading these verses in the light of the prooemic anticipation of Vespasian's catasterism'.

As inspirations for mortal heroes, Bacchus and Apollo are somewhat odd choices. Apollo was of course always a god; he only had to do a year of servitude to the mortal Admetus.⁵⁹ Bacchus was conceived of a mortal mother (Semele), but became a god after her untimely death and his ultimate 'birth' from Zeus' thigh.⁶⁰ So precisely how Apollo's and Bacchus' experiences reflect the *durum vobis iter et grave caeli* (565) that Jupiter had established for his three Argonautic sons is unclear. But perhaps for the point that Jupiter is really making such questions are extraneous: he is letting us know that all five figures are his sons, and their promotion and divinity have depended and will depend on his authority.⁶¹

This dynastic resonance in Jupiter's exercise of power is amplified by the portent that he gives to Castor and Pollux alone, a portent that has significant intertextual resonances. Jupiter sends a flame that splits in two and settles on the brows of the brothers (1.568–73). The sign recalls the double portent involving Ascanius in *Aeneid* 2.⁶² When Aeneas' father Anchises refuses to flee from burning Troy, a harmless flame flickers at the top of Ascanius' head and temples (*Aen.* 2.682–4). This omen seems to have been Virgil's invention, one that may have been influenced by the story of Servius Tullius (as told in Livy 1.39), and that in the *Aeneid* points to the future rule of Ascanius in Italy. But this omen elicits a second one in Virgil. Anchises calls upon Jupiter to confirm the portent just received. A shooting star or comet quickly passes through the sky, in which an allusion to Julius Caesar's catasterism may be seen (*Aen.* 2.693–8). At the games celebrated in honour of the assassinated leader in the summer of 44 BCE, a comet appeared and was taken to indicate his apotheosis. As in Virgil, the flame in Valerius is also a *facem* ('torch') that metaphorically creates a *sulcus* ('furrow') in the clouds (Val. Fl. 1.569; *Aen.* 2.694),⁶³ and since Castor and Pollux's apotheosis is precisely what is at issue, the intertextual connection becomes stronger. Thus when Jupiter said *tendite in astra, viri*, he was not speaking simply in the metaphorical sense in which his sons would reach the

59 This is the usual interpretation, but see Zissos (2008) *ad loc.* for other possibilities. In addition, Apollo, like Hercules (see note above), played an important role for Jupiter in the Gigantomachy by killing Ephialtes (with Hercules' help, Apollod. 1.6.2) or both Ephialtes and Otos (Hom. *Od.* 11.318–20).

60 Though there are variant stories about his birth and immortality. See Gantz (1993) 112–19.

61 Davis (1989) 64 notes: 'The ruler apparently intends to keep power and gain in the family.'

62 E.g. Kleywegt (2005) *ad loc.* For the ideological significance of the Virgilian portents, see Ganiban (2012) 263–4. Both flames are described in similar language: Val. Fl. 1.572 *lumenque innoxia fundit*; *Aen.* 2.683 *fundere lumen apex, tactuque innoxia mollis*.

63 E.g. Spaltenstein (2002) *ad loc.*

heavens as gods,⁶⁴ but affirming that Castor and Pollux would actually become stars, i.e. they would undergo catasterism—the same fate that will befall the ship Argo.

Jupiter's address to his sons is thus not an extraneous coda to the main prophecy but a concluding and definitive transformation of the Virgilian model. Whereas Virgil's Jupiter had ended his speech with an explanation of the achievements of Venus' (and his own) descendants (i.e. the Romans and Augustus) as the telos of fate, Valerius' Jupiter, while not explicitly tying the Argonautic expedition to Rome, does encourage and promote the future greatness of his Argonautic sons Castor, Pollux and Hercules. That Jupiter urges on a certain type of hero (i.e. his own descendants) and a certain type of heroic reward (apotheosis/catasterism) stands in meaningful contrast to the type of heroism and heroic reward voiced by other Argonauts, and especially their leader Jason,⁶⁵ who rouses men to join him on his expedition with appeals to *gloria* and *religio* (1.76–80).⁶⁶

Finally, Jupiter's closing address to his sons has demeaning implications for his interlocutor Sol. While the references to his victories over the Titans and Giants might already reinforce Sol's limited influence and ambivalent position in the new world order,⁶⁷ Jupiter's words concerning his sons might be his most mordant for several reasons. First, Jupiter concludes with the unusual exemplum of Apollo (indeed his last word is *Apollo*), even though Apollo's elevation in the new regime would ultimately come at the expense of Sol's role in the cosmos. Apollo gradually took on many of the functions of Sol in the literary tradition, and certainly by the early imperial period Apollo was the more important god, promoted especially by Augustus.⁶⁸ Second, although Jupiter

64 Moreover, if there is a reference to [Sen.] *HO* 1971, *virtus in astra tendit*, though the date of the play's composition relative to that of the *Argonautica* is unclear, the phrase might also intertextually suggest Hercules' apotheosis, further underscoring the three sons as Jupiter's real addressees in 562–7. For this potential intertext, see Ripoll (1998) 99 n. 54 and Zissos (2008) *ad loc.*

65 Cf. e.g. Groß (2003) 239–40, 248–9; Stover (2012a) 59–61; Castelletti in this volume.

66 For discussion of whether *gloria*, *religio* or both motivate Jason, see especially Manuwald (2009) 590–2 with n. 16 and (2013) 33.

67 Though it should be noted that Jupiter's preoccupation with his victory over the Titans and Giants and with the establishment of his new regime is somewhat weakened by the continued ramifications of past strife in the present, not least in the storm sent against the Argonauts by (gigantomachic) Boreas in the episode that follows, on which see especially Zissos (2006a).

68 Apollo's usurpation of the Sun's functions is first mentioned explicitly in Euripides (Gantz (1993) 31); cf. Miller (2009).

had voiced no concern for Sol's son Aeetes,⁶⁹ he promotes his own sons, who were to become divinities. This promotion of his family seems to undermine his claims to *iusti facultas*: while he might not have had these sons when he established the first instalment of fate, he has the children now, he seems to promote them, and they will of course attain divinity, as lines 562–7 indicate.

Conclusion

Jupiter's prophecy sidesteps or even rejects the two dominant ways that the Argonautic expedition might be interpreted—as either a great moment in human achievement or a criminal and punishable violation of existing physical boundaries.⁷⁰ Instead he uses the introduction of navigation with the Argo as a defining element for his regime: with it, he establishes war as constitutive of his worldview and assigns himself the ability to decide where international dominance among mortals will reside after the decline of Greek power.

Jupiter's ability to act with such sovereignty stems from his military victories: his conquests of the Titans and Giants that won him and preserved his rule over the cosmos and the ability to determine fate. As a result, Valerius' choice of Sol as an interlocutor for Jupiter in the divine council is resonant. Their dialogue is not simply between two gods but between representatives of two generations of gods, Titan and Olympian. Even if Sol did support Jupiter, his subservient position in the new regime is made clear, as is Jupiter's implicit disdain for the sun god's concerns.

At the same time, Jupiter's exercise of his supreme power redirects the heroic literary tradition. As we have seen, at the end of his speech he does not call for the success of the overall Argonautic expedition, nor does he single out its leader or specific heroic virtues. Instead he focuses on three of his demigod children and tells them to strive for the stars. By doing so, Jupiter on some level exploits the Argonautic expedition so that it is not simply about a heroic adventure to Colchis—in fact, Colchis and the Argonauts are never explicitly mentioned in Jupiter's apostrophe at 1.563–7. Rather, he uses the heroic adventure to promote his own sons to divinity, even though their apotheoses will not in fact be attained because of their specific roles as Argonauts.

69 Cf. also Sol's allusion to Phaethon's death in 526–7. See n. 22 above.

70 Indeed, some scholars, such as Zissos (2006a), see these two ideological interpretations as opposed throughout the epic without any resolution; they thus form a kind of *aporia* that pervades the epic.

Thus in the worldview of Valerius' Jupiter, military/political supremacy is what is valued most and is reflected in the promotion of his mortal descendants among the Argonauts who will indeed become gods. Jupiter privileges victory over virtue, his descendants and sovereignty above all else. Since such emphasis on power and self-interest defines the king of the gods, and since familial strife as a means to achieve dominance even among the gods (e.g. the Titanomachy) is valorised, civil violence committed by mortal kings (e.g. Aetes and Pelias) should not be surprising. Valerius depicts a troubling view of monarchic power, its attainment and continuation—one that reworks the literary tradition and perhaps reflects the struggle for supreme power in the early Empire.⁷¹

71 I would like to thank Mark Heerink and Gesine Manuwald for their patience, insightful comments and careful editing of this chapter.

Ovid and Valerius Flaccus

Alison Keith

Introduction

With the exception of Virgil's *Aeneid*, no text so thoroughly informed the early imperial Roman literary imagination as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The widespread popularity of Ovid's epic poem in the literary culture of early imperial Rome is reflected in citations by numerous authors in a wide range of literary genres—rhetoric, satire, epigram, epic, prose narrative and technical treatises.¹ Recent scholarship has focused on the political, thematic, structural and stylistic debts to the *Aeneid* in early imperial Roman literary culture, and largely ignored the pervasive attention in this period to the literary and imperial programmes of the *Metamorphoses*.² Yet the early imperial period set the parameters of the reception of Ovid's poem in succeeding centuries, often by drawing on Ovidian subjects, themes and poetic techniques to trace fissures in the optimistic Virgilian epic paradigm. Valerius' *Argonautica* enjoys pride of place in this dual reception of Virgil and Ovid, as the first extant example in Latin mythological epic of such large-scale negotiation of the *Aeneid* through the lens of the *Metamorphoses*.³

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- 1 Barchiesi (2001b); Dewar (2002); Hardie (2002a); Keith and Rupp (2007a); McNelis (2009).
 - 2 For the central impact of Virgil's *Aeneid* on Valerius, see e.g. Gossage (1959); Mozley (1963–4); Hudson-Williams (1973); Fitch (1976); Hardie (1989) and (1993); Quint (1993); and Ganiban in this volume. Wheeler (2002) offers an important countervailing discussion of the impact of Ovid on imperial Latin epic and traces the ascendancy that Ovid enjoyed in nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship on 'Silver' Latin literature (Williams (1978) is representative). He also identifies a more recent critical trend, emerging in the late twentieth century and still continuing strongly in the new millennium, to rehabilitate Flavian epic as the critical spur to renewed attention to the impact of Virgil's *Aeneid* on this body of poetry.
 - 3 On the reception of Ovid in Valerius, see e.g. Hershkowitz (1998b) 68–78; Dewar (2002); Hardie (2002a); Zissos (2004a) and (2008); Keith (2013); cf. Manilius (1889) 250–1 and Summers (1894) 37–9. On Valerius' Io narrative, and its relationship to Ovid's, see von Albrecht (1977), Davis (2009) and Murgatroyd (2009) *ad loc.*; on Valerius' Hesione episode, and its relationship to Ovid's account of Perseus and Andromeda, see Burck (1976) and Poortvliet (1991a) *ad loc.*; on Valerius' Hylas episode, see Heerink (forthcoming a); on Valerius' Medea in relation to Ovidian Medeas, see (Stover) 2003.

Proem

Valerius announces the subject of his poem as ‘the first straits traversed by the gods’ great sons’ and the ‘prophetic ship’, the Argo, ‘which dared to pursue the shores of Scythian Phasis and burst unswerving through the clashing rocks’ (*Prima deum magnis canimus freta pervia natis | fatidicamque ratem, Scythici quae Phasidis oras | ausa sequi mediosque inter iuga concita cursus | rumpere*, 1.1–4).⁴ Critics have identified multiple sources for these lines, in the proems of Apollonius’ *Argonautica* and Catullus’ *carmen* 64, but also in Horace, Ovid and Seneca. If Apollonius is obviously a privileged model, so, as Alessandro Barchiesi has noted,⁵ is the opening of an Ovidian propempticon in the second book of the *Amores*, which begins as a ‘meta-*Argonautica*’ and has influenced Valerius’ choice of opening word (*prima*), the relative clause with *quae*, the anthropomorphism of the daring ship, and the reference to the Clashing Rocks: *Prima malas docuit mirantibus aequoris undis | Peliaco pinus vertice caesa vias, | quae concurrentis inter temeraria cautes | conspicuam fulvo vellere vexit ovem* (‘First to teach evil paths on the wondering waves of the sea was the pine tree cut down on Pelion’s summit, which dared to convey the fleece conspicuous for its tawny pelt between the Clashing Rocks’, *Am.* 2.11.1–4). Ovid repeatedly treated Argonautic material, primarily in connection with Medea, who is the subject not only of his lost tragedy, but also of *Heroides* 12 (and arguably *Heroides* 6), as well as the first half of *Metamorphoses* 7. Valerius’ debt to Ovid’s Argonautic itineraries emerges in his formulation of the Argo’s goal as *Phasidis oras*, ‘the shores of Scythian Phasis’ (Val. Fl. 1.2), which recalls Ovid’s introductory scene-setting to his Argonautic narrative at the outset of *Metamorphoses* 7 (*contigerant rapidas limosi Phasidos undas*, ‘they had reached the swift waters of muddy Phasis’, *Met.* 7.6), itself modelled on Catullus 64.2–3 (*dicuntur liquidas Neptuni nasse per undas | Phasidos ad fluctus*, ‘they are said to have sailed through Neptune’s liquid waters to the waves of Phasis’).

In addition to his lexical and thematic borrowings from Ovid in the proem, Valerius follows his Augustan predecessor (and his Greek model, Apollonius) in adopting a chronological framework for his Argonautic narrative, opening the poem with the construction of the Argo and departure of the Argonauts from Greece. Moreover, he rehearses the mythological theme of *translatio imperii* from East to West realised under the rule of his deified dedicatee, the emperor Vespasian (1.15–21), and celebrated in Jupiter’s prophecy at the end

4 I cite the text of Valerius Flaccus from Ehlers (1980); translations are lightly adapted from Mozley (1934). Bold is used to indicate Ovidian linguistic influence in Valerius’ text.

5 Barchiesi (2001b) 330–1, cited by Zissos (2008) 72.

of the first book (1.531–67). This larger temporal movement of power from East to West also evokes the narrative trajectory of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from Greece to Rome, culminating in the projected deification of Augustus (*Met.* 15.855–70), and aligns Valerius' epic with Ovid's *perpetuum carmen*, which (like Apollonius') proceeds to relate the events of the Argonauts' journey to Colchis in chronological order, in contrast to the handling of the narrative in the epics of Virgil and Homer, which begin *in medias res*.

Metre

The proliferation of Ovidian diction, themes, characters and settings in the proem to Valerius' *Argonautica* is complemented by the Flavian poet's debt to Ovid in his treatment of the metre of classical epic, dactylic hexameter. As is often remarked, Latin poets of the imperial age (and later) follow Ovid rather than Virgil, and Valerius is a prime exponent of metrical Ovidianism in his hexametrical practice. James H. Dee's recent computer-generated studies of the hexameters of Virgil and Ovid illuminate important commonalities and differences in their handling of the metre.⁶ Dee has demonstrated conclusively that both poets share two of their three most common hexameter schemata (DDSSDS and DSSSDS), as well as two others in their top six (DSDSDS and DDDSDS), differing 'only in the relative proportions of those patterns' and in the prevalence, in Virgil, of predominantly spondaic patterns (SDSSDS and SSSSDS) in contrast to Ovid's preference for 'the neutral DSSDDDS and dactylic DDSDDS'.⁷ Indeed, the most striking feature of the Ovidian hexameter is a predilection for a dactylic first foot (occurring in his eight most frequent hexameter patterns), while that of the Virgilian hexameter is a preference for a fourth-foot spondee (occurring in his eight most frequent hexameter patterns). In addition to his preference for dactylic patterns, Ovid favours the coincidence of ictus and accent and avoids heavy elision and other irregularities (such as half-lines and hypermetric lines) that Virgil cultivated, in order to achieve a smoother and swifter line of verse.⁸

Many scholars have commented on the Ovidian cast of Valerius' hexameters,⁹ for which he has often been the target of critical censure. A century ago, for example, Marcus Dimsdale remarked: 'in his verse for all his wish to be

6 Dee (2004), (2005) and (2006).

7 Dee (2006) vii.

8 Otis (1966); Duckworth (1966), (1967), (1969); Kenney (2002).

9 On the Ovidian treatment of the hexameter in Valerius, see Duckworth (1969) 100–2.

Virgilian he has fallen under the influence of the smoother and more imitable Ovid, to whom, indeed, in his preference of the dactyl, Valerius approaches more nearly than any other Latin poet'.¹⁰ Although George Duckworth qualified Dimsdale's findings with the observation that Calpurnius Siculus was still more Ovidian in his preference for dactyls, he further condemned Valerius for going 'far beyond Ovid in his repetition of patterns and his complete disregard of variety'.¹¹ Valerius' most recent commentators eschew such condemnation, but concur that his treatment of the hexameter is more Ovidian than Virgilian, in his preference for dactyls over spondees, aversion to spondaic verses, reluctance to admit spondaic words to the first foot, and restriction of elision.¹² The four-line proem of the *Argonautica* well illustrates Valerius' adherence to Ovidian metrical practices, in the succession of opening dactyls, preponderance of dactyls over spondees, and avoidance of elision that marks the lines (DSDD, DDDS, DDSD, DDSS; the sole elision, *mediosque inter*, in the third line causes no difficulty).

Argo

Valerius' lexical, metrical and mythological debts, in his proem, to Ovid stand in particularly close relation to his description of the painted decoration on the Argo's hull some hundred lines later. The ekphrasis has been interpreted as 'sur-charged' with programmatic intertextuality,¹³ through the literalisation of the metaphor of the ship of poetry.¹⁴ On one side, the boatwright Argus depicts the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (1.130–9); on the other, scenes from the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs (1.140–8). The selection and treatment of scenes invokes Catullus 64 and, especially, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.¹⁵ In his recent commentary, Andrew Zissos has detailed Valerius' specific lexical and thematic debts in the passage to Ovid's accounts of Peleus' rape of Thetis (*Met.* 11.221–65) and of the Centaurs' drunken rampage at the wedding of Pirithous and Hippodamia

10 Dimsdale (1915) 449, quoted in Duckworth (1969) 103.

11 Duckworth (1969) 103–4.

12 Zissos (2008) lxi–lxvi.

13 The adjective is from Zissos (2008) xxxix; cf. Feeney (1991) 315–37; Malamud and McGuire (1993); Hershkowitz (1998b) *passim*; Barchiesi (2001b) 317–20. On the ekphrasis, see also Heerink in this volume.

14 Davis (1989) 48.

15 Barchiesi (1995) 62 (= Barchiesi (2001a) 137–8); cf. Baier (2004) 18–20, as well as the introduction to Baier (2001).

(*Met.* 12.210–535) respectively.¹⁶ If the deep structure of Valerius' *Argonautica* is Apollonian, its Latin form is distinctively Ovidian. It is thus not surprising that on the voyage to Colchis Valerius' Argo continually revisits the myths and mythological sites made famous by Ovid's epic, such as Io and the Argive Mt Lyrceum, Perseus and Andromeda, and Proserpina and Enna. Often, though not exclusively, Valerius reworks Ovidian material in passages that seem to renew the sexual symbolism with which the Augustan poet had invested the *locus amoenus* as a landscape of desire.¹⁷

Hesione

An early example in the *Argonautica* comes in the second book, when the Valerian Hercules rescues the Trojan princess Hesione from a rocky crag in the Troad (2.451–549).¹⁸ The myth is briefly related by Ovid at *Met.* 11.205–13, but is only rarely mentioned elsewhere in extant Latin literature.¹⁹ Of even more interest, however, is Valerius' recasting of this Ovidian myth in the lineaments of another, for Valerius here extensively reworks Ovid's account of Perseus' rescue of Andromeda in *Metamorphoses* 4. Valerius specifies Perseus as an appropriate exemplar for his own hero early in the epic (1.64–70), when Jason is commissioned by the tyrant Pelias to recover the Golden Fleece from Aeetes in Colchis, describing him as wishing to possess the heroic attributes of Perseus (his winged sandals) or of Triptolemus (Ceres' airborne chariot, harnessed to flying dragons).²⁰ Both mythical heroes receive their fullest treatment in extant Latin literature from Ovid, who follows the lengthy Perseus panel of *Met.* 4.610–5.249 with his account of the rape of Proserpina, which includes the details of Ceres' gift of agriculture through the agency of Triptolemus (*Met.* 5.642–61; Ovid also rehearses this myth in *Fast.* 4.502–60). But the Ovidian Perseus is also an obvious model for Valerius' Hercules because of the Herculean resonances with which Ovid endows his hero, who finds his mettle tested in a series of trials or 'labours' (*labor*, *Met.* 4.739, 5.243; cf. *factum*, 4.757, *pericula*, 4.787),²¹ and is mistaken by Atlas for Hercules himself (*Met.* 4.644–5).

16 Zissos (2008) 153–66 *ad loc.*, following the lead of Barchiesi (1995) 62 (= Barchiesi (2001a) 137–8); cf. Spaltenstein (2002) 77–86 *ad loc.*, and Baier (2004) 18–20.

17 Hinds (2002).

18 On the episode, see Burck (1976) and Manuwald (2004).

19 Bömer (1980) *ad loc.*

20 Zissos (2008) 120.

21 On Ovid's 'Herculean' Perseus, see Keith (1999).

When, in Book 2, Valerius relates Hercules' own exemplary rescue of a maiden abandoned to the ravages of a sea monster, he appropriates Ovid's Herculean Perseus as an apt model. Particularly striking is the (non-Ovidian) phrasing of Valerius' opening description of the seductive charms of the shore of the Troad: *Alcides Telamonque comes dum litora blando | anfractu sinuosa legunt* ('while Hercules and his comrade Telamon pick their way along the shore winding in a charming curve', 2.451–2). Valerius' choice of verb (*legunt*) hints at his own wide 'reading' in the epic tradition,²² while the 'winding' shore along which his heroes walk also implies their author's narrative digression from a narrowly focussed Argonautic itinerary. The seductive charm of the strand, moreover, invites us to expect an Ovidian narrative of amatory desire such as we find in the Perseus episode of *Metamorphoses* 4,²³ though in this respect Valerius plays against our Ovidian expectations, to offer an Ovidian narrative setting that evokes a divine rape, even as he characterises Hercules as a thoroughly 'epic' hero, motivated by glory rather than by love to save the beautiful maiden: *quale laborantis Nemees iter aut Erymanthi | vidit et infectae miseratus flumina Lernae* ('with such pity had he viewed the path to struggling Nemea or Erymanthus and poisoned Lerna's waters', Val. Fl. 2.495–6). Hercules reads this landscape as part of his epic path to glory, rejecting the erotic context in which he finds himself.

Hercules is introduced as Alcides (2.451), the 'grandson of Alcaeus'—in classical myth the son of Perseus and father of Amphitryo (the mortal father of Hercules). Common though the patronymic undoubtedly is in Latin epic, Valerius' use here implicitly acknowledges his hero's genealogical descent from Perseus in myth as well as his literary descent from Ovid's Perseus narrative in *Metamorphoses* 4–5. Certainly the Valerian Hercules imitates his Ovidian exemplar throughout his heroic rescue of Hesione.²⁴ Both heroes are struck by the sight of a maiden bound to a rock and exposed to a cruel death (*Met.* 4.627 ~ Val. Fl. 2.463), looking for all the world like a statue (*Met.* 4.675 ~ Val. Fl. 2.465–6), despite her tears (*Met.* 4.674 ~ Val. Fl. 2.464); both inquire into her lineage (*Met.* 4.678–81 ~ Val. Fl. 2.468–69) and hear her plaintive tale (*Met.* 4.685–8 ~ Val. Fl. 2.471–92) before rescuing her from the sea monster (*Met.* 4.695–739 ~ Val. Fl. 2.512–49), though their rewards for epic valour

22 For *lego* in the sense of 'traverse', see *OLD* s.v. 7; in the sense of 'read', see *OLD* s.v. 8. I am grateful to Andrew Feldherr for pressing the metaliterary interpretation.

23 Cf. Hinds (2002) 130–6.

24 On Valerius' debt in this episode to Ovid's Perseus and Andromeda narrative in *Met.* 4, see Frank (1971); Burck (1976); Poortvliet (1991a) 239–94; Hershkovitz (1998b) 72–5; Spaltenstein (2002) 435–48.

differ, with Perseus demanding Andromeda as his wife (*Met.* 4.703; cf. *prae-mia*, *Met.* 4.757, 5.25) but Hercules accepting the horses Laomedon promises (*donaque dicta feram*, Val. Fl. 2.576). In his characterisation of Hercules, Valerius alludes only obliquely to Perseus' erotic motivation—in the seductive landscape setting that opens the episode and again at the end, in a simile that compares Hercules' victory over the sea monster to the victory of a bull in a contest for love (Val. Fl. 2.545–9)²⁵ which, by focusing on the defeated bull's return, reverses (as it rehearses) Virgil's description of bulls fighting over a heifer in the third *Georgic* (3.224–8).²⁶

Ovidian Landscapes

Elsewhere in his *Argonautica*, however, Valerius explicitly recuperates the erotic undertones of Ovid's *locus amoenus* landscapes to support the amatory underpinning of his main narrative,²⁷ especially in his association, in a pair of similes, of the young Medea with the verdant landscape of Hecate's grove outside Colchis (Val. Fl. 5.333–51, 6.495–502 ~ *Met.* 7.74–95).²⁸ Valerius flags the setting as an Ovidian topos when he introduces it, by comparing the banks of the Phasis to the site of Proserpina's rape in Sicily:²⁹

25 *regem inde petens superabat ovanti | litora tuta gradu, qualis per pascua victor | ingreditur, tum colla tumens, tum celsior armis | taurus, ubi adsueti pectoris stabula alta revisit | et patrium nemus et bello quos ultus amores* ('Thence with triumphant steps he passes across the safe shore to meet the king; just as a victorious bull advances through the pastures, his neck swelling and his shoulders loftier, when he returns to the high fold of the accustomed herd, his native glade and his love, whom he has avenged in battle', 2.545–9).

26 *nec mos bellantis una stabulare, sed alter | victus abit longeque ignotis exsulat oris, | multa gemens ignominiam plagasque superbi | victoris, tum quos amisit inultus amores, | et stabula aspectans regnis excessit avitis* ('Nor is it the custom for the rivals to herd together, but the vanquished bull departs and dwells far away, an exile on unknown shores, lamenting many things—his shame, the blows of the arrogant victor, and the love he has lost unavenged—and then, with a wistful glance at his stall, he departed from his ancestral realm', Virg. *G.* 3.224–8).

27 On the Ovidian colour of Valerius' erotic epic narrative, see Stover (2003) and Heerink (forthcoming a).

28 On similes in Valerius, see Fitch (1976) and Gärtner (1994). On the Proserpina-Medea similes, see Fitch (1976) 122; Bessone (1991) 81–7; Gärtner (1994) 137–60; Wijsman (1996) 172–7 and (2000b) 192–6; and Fucecchi (1997) 128–31 *ad loc.*

29 On this simile, see Fitch (1976) 122; Bessone (1991) 81–7; Wijsman (1996) 172–7 *ad loc.*

namque soporatos tacitis in sedibus artus
 dum premit alta quies nullaeque in virgine curae,
visa pavens castis **Hecates** excedere **lucis**. 335

...

his turbata minis fluvios ripamque petebat
 Phasidis **aequali** Scythidum comitante caterva.
florea per **verni** qualis iuga duxit Hymetti
 aut **Sicula sub rupe** choros hinc gressibus haerens
 Pallados hinc carae **Proserpina** iuncta Dianae, 345
 altior ac nulla comitum **certante**, prius quam
 palluit et **viso** pulsus decor omnis Averno:
 talis et in vittis geminae cum lumine taedae
 Colchis erat ...

For while deep quiet held her slumbering limbs in the silent bedchamber and no trouble was in her maidenly breast, she seemed to her terror to step forth from Hecate's holy grove ... Disturbed by these threatening signs she sought Phasis' banks and stream amid a band of Scythian girls, her peers in age. As Proserpina in springtime led the dance over Hymettus' flowering ridges or beneath the cliffs of Sicily, on this side stepping close to Pallas, on that side hand in hand with her beloved Diana, taller than they and surpassing all her fellows, before she grew pale at the sight of Avernus and all her beauty fled: so fair also was the Colchian in her sacred fillets by the light of her twin torches ...

(5.333–5, 341–9)

The basic plot of the nubile maiden, disturbed by dreams, going down to the riverbank where she is compared to Artemis, is Homeric, applied to Nausicaa in *Odyssey* 6, and subsequently rehearsed by Apollonius in application to Medea in Book 3 of his *Argonautica* (and by Virgil to Dido in *Aeneid* 1). The comparison to Sicily and the reference to Proserpina's rape there, however, are Ovidian intrusions into this Homero-Apollonian(-Virgilian) matrix, for the site of Proserpina's rape at Enna in Sicily was the subject of a famous ekphrasis in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:³⁰

haud procul Hennaëis lacus est a moenibus altae, 385
 nomine Pergus, aquae; non illo plura Caystros

30 On Ovid's treatments of the rape of Proserpina in both *Metamorphoses* 5 and *Fasti* 4, see Heinze (1919); Hinds (1987) and (2002).

carmina cynorum labentibus audit in undis.
 silva coronat aquas cingens latus omne suisque
 frondibus ut velo Phoebeos summovet ictus.
 frigora dant rami, varios humus umida flores; 390
 perpetuum ver est. quo dum Proserpina luco
 ludit et aut violas aut candida lilia carpit,
 dumque puellari studio calathosque sinumque
 implet et aequales certat superare legendo,
 paene simul visa est dilecta que raptaque Diti. 395

Not far from the walls of Enna is a pool of deep water, Pergus by name; Cayster does not hear more swans' songs in its gliding waters than that pool. A surrounding forest crowns the waters on every side, and keeps away the sun's rays with its foliage as with an awning; the branches supply cool shade, the moist earth purple flowers: there is everlasting spring. While Proserpina plays in this grove and plucks either violets or white lilies, and while she fills her baskets and lap in girlish enthusiasm and contests to surpass her companions in gathering, almost as soon as she was seen, she was loved and ravished by Dis.

(*Met.* 5.385–95)

Valerius' Ovidian topography puts pressure on the Homero-Apollonian template of his narrative, in which a foreign hero's arrival leads an unmarried princess to think of marriage, and the Flavian epicist thereby motivates more fully the mythological cliché, in which the intruder in the landscape ravishes the maiden whose beauty the landscape represents.³¹ Valerius recuperates specific details of Ovid's famous ekphrasis to mark the debt. As Medea sets out from Hecate's grove she seems to enter that Ovidian glade (*Met.* 5.391) not far from Enna's walls (*Met.* 5.385) under the Sicilian cliffs (Val. Fl. 5.344), where Proserpina (*Met.* 5.391 ~ Val. Fl. 5.345) frolicked with her playfellows (*Met.* 5.394 ~ Val. Fl. 5.342), plucking the flowers (*Met.* 5.392 ~ Val. Fl. 5.343) of spring (*Met.* 5.391 ~ Val. Fl. 5.343) before being no sooner seen than ravished (*visa... raptaque*, *Met.* 5.395; cf. Medea's dream, Val. Fl. 5.335) by the Lord of the Underworld (*Met.* 5.395, Val. Fl. 5.347). Even Valerius' image of flowering Hymettus (Val. Fl. 5.543) may be owed to Ovid, for in *Metamorphoses* 7 the Ovidian Cephalus encounters Aurora on Mt Hymettus and is no sooner seen than, like Proserpina, ravished: *vertice de summo semper florentis Hymetti* |

31 On the latter trope (the association of woman with landscape) in Latin epic, see Keith (2000) 36–64.

lutea mane videt pulsas Aurora tenebris | invitumque rapit ('Golden Aurora, driving off the shadows in the morning, saw me on the very top of ever-flowering Hymettus, and ravished me against my will', *Met.* 7.702–4).

Valerius focalises Hecate's grove through Ovid's Enna—and Medea through Proserpina—again in the following book, when Juno (in the guise of Medea's sister Chalciope) leads her protégé to the walls of Colchis, in order to give her an unimpeded view of Jason's prowess on the battlefield:³²

ducitur infelix ad moenia summa futuri	490
nescia virgo mali et falsae commissa sorori;	
lilia per vernos lucent velut alba colores	
praecipue, quis vita brevis totusque parumper	
floret honor fuscis et iam notus imminet alis.	
hanc residens altis Hecate Perseia lucis	495
flebat et has imo referebat pectore voces:	
'deseris heu nostrum nemus aequalesque catervas,	
a misera, ut Graias haut sponte vageris ad urbes!	
non iniussa tamen; neque te, mea cura, relinquam.	
magna fugae monumenta dabis, spernere nec usquam	500
mendaci captiva viro, meque ille magistram	
sentiet et raptu famulae doluisse pudendo.'	

The unlucky maiden is led to the summit of the walls, ignorant of future ill, surrendering herself to her feigned sister; even as white lilies gleam conspicuous through the hues of springtime, lilies whose life is short and their glory reigns but for a while and already the dark pinions of the South wind hover near. Persean Hecate dwelling in her lofty groves beheld her, and from the depth of her heart uttered these words: 'Alas! You leave our grove and your companions' bands, unhappy girl, to wander to the cities of the Greeks against your will! Yet not unbidden do you go; nor will I forsake you, my dear. You will give a great memorial of your flight, nor though a captive will you ever be despised by your faithless husband; he will know that I was your teacher and that I grieved in shame when he ravished my handmaid.'

(6.490–502)

32 On this scene, see also Fucecchi in this volume.

The Valerian Medea, though *infelix* like Virgil's Dido, is still more closely modelled on Ovid's Medea, who claims for herself the epithet *infelix* (*Met.* 7.18),³³ and Ovid's Proserpina. For Medea's divine patroness Hecate views Medea, like Proserpina, as the victim of a predatory male (in this case Jason). Indeed, suborned by Juno (again like Dido), Medea is all too similar to the lilies that Proserpina was gathering (*Met.* 5.392) when Dis plucked her from Ovid's Enna ('her self a fairer flower' in Milton's famous reminiscence of the scene, *Paradise Lost* 4.270).

The location from which Hecate observes Medea in Valerius' epic (6.495) also seems significant, since it pinpoints quite precisely the site of the Ovidian Medea's deviation from *pudor* to *ardor*, as she traverses the path from bed-chamber to grove:

ibat ad antiquas **Hecates Perseidos** aras
 quas **nemus** umbrosum secretaque silva tegebat,
 et iam fortis erat pulsusque resederat ardor,
 cum **videt** Aesoniden extinctaque **flamma reluxit**.

She was going to the ancient altars of Persean Hecate, which a shady grove and hidden wood concealed, and now she was strong of purpose and her vanquished passion had died down, when she saw Aeson's son and the extinguished flame lit up again.

(*Met.* 7.74–7)

The Ovidian Medea, intending to honour her vow to Hecate, nonetheless succumbs again (*flamma reluxit*, 77) to her traditional passion for Jason as she passes through a briefly sketched *locus amoenus* (75), a setting that recalls the earlier landscapes of desire in *Metamorphoses* 1–5, in which nymphs are repeatedly ravished by lustful gods.³⁴ In Valerius too, Medea succumbs once again to Jason's charms. In both Ovid and Valerius, the site of Hecate's grove marks Medea's rejection of Colchian commitments out of amatory desire, in favour of engagement with Greece and the Argonauts, in the person of Jason. In repeatedly setting Medea in the verdant landscapes of desire that Ovid developed in the *Metamorphoses*, Valerius plays upon the erotic underpinnings of

33 On Medea's monologues in Ovid and Valerius, see Auhagen (2004).

34 On the co-implication of violence and desire in the Ovidian *locus amoenus*, see Hinds (2002).

his martial narrative³⁵ and pays homage at the same time to his Augustan predecessor's co-implication of desire and violence in the epic landscape.

Io

A sophisticated reader of Ovid's epic, Valerius explicitly takes up the Augustan poet's signature theme of transformation in another passage heavily indebted to the *Metamorphoses*. When the Argonauts reach the Bosphorus in Book 4, Orpheus marks the occasion with a song memorialising the origins of the straits' name (Val. Fl. 4.345–7) from the unfortunate Io's crossing there en route to Egypt, a myth famously recounted by Ovid in the opening book of the *Metamorphoses* (*Met.* 1.588–750 ~ Val. Fl. 4.344–422). As Paul Murgatroyd has noted,³⁶ there is a particular piquancy in attributing a narrative concerning the pursuit of a beautiful nymph, in which the themes of music and death in the countryside also play a large role, to this particular bard, for his thematic dynamic closely recalls that of the Virgilian Orpheus in the fourth *Georgic*. But it is Ovid in *Metamorphoses* 10, rather than Virgil in *Georgics* 4 or Apollonius in the *Argonautica*, who first reports Orpheus' songs in direct speech, and Valerius follows Ovid in this self-confident gesture here, as elsewhere.

Scholars have demonstrated the extent and intensity of Valerius' emulative engagement with Ovid's Io narrative in its linguistic texture here.³⁷ As Debra Hershkowitz observes, 'Valerius treats his Ovidian intertext in an Ovidian fashion, passing over quickly what is presented in an expanded form in the antecedent, and expanding on what has previously been passed over quickly, as well as requiring a familiarity with the antecedent in order to fill in the blanks and to appreciate the previous blanks which have been filled.'³⁸ My discussion supplements the readings of von Albrecht, Hershkowitz and Murgatroyd, by bringing out Valerius' metapoetic commentary on his intertextual play in this

35 Cf. Stover (2003) and Heerink (forthcoming a). On 'love and war' in the *Argonautica*, see also Fucecchi in this volume.

36 Murgatroyd (2009) 179–80.

37 On Valerius' debt to Ovid in the episode, see von Albrecht (1977); Hershkowitz (1998b) 68–72; Spaltenstein (2004a), 292–307; Murgatroyd (2009) 177–207. Now also P. J. Davis (2009).

38 Hershkowitz (1998b) 69. Cf. Murgatroyd (2009) 179, who notes that Valerius treats Ovid in 'just the way Ovid treated his own sources, so VF is doing an Ovid on Ovid'.

episode, his 'reflexive annotation', in Stephen Hinds' well-known formulation,³⁹ of his transformation of Ovid's treatment of the myth.

Valerius announces Orpheus' rehearsal of a familiar Ovidian myth in his narrative scene-setting: *refert casusque locorum | Inachidosque vias pelagusque emensa iuvencae | exilia intentisque canit* ('Orpheus retells the history of the place, the travels and exile, measured out over the sea, of Inachus' heifer, and sings to an eager audience', 4.349–51). The journey motif of the inset tale is thematically appropriate to Valerius' Argonautic narrative, but Valerius calls attention to his intertextual engagement with an earlier version (or versions) of the myth of Io by his use of the verb *refert*, which functions as an 'Alexandrian footnote'⁴⁰ to predecessors' models: Orpheus 'has read, memorized, and can now recite'⁴¹ them. Valerius retains Ovid's precise characterisation of the unhappy Io (in the same metrical *sedes*: cf. *Met.* 1.610–11, *inque nitentem | Inachidos vultus mutaverat ille iuvencam*) and he even appropriates his opening word (*viderat a patrio redeuntem Iuppiter Io*, *Met.* 1.588) for that of Orpheus' song: *videre priores | saepe Iovem in terras Argivaeque regna Pelasgum | virginis Iasiae blandos descendere ad ignes* ('men of old often saw Jupiter come down to earth, to the Argive kingdom of the Pelasgians, for love of Iasius' charming maiden daughter', 4.351–3). Valerius' reference to an earlier generation's frequent sighting of Jupiter's amatory intrigue with Io thus refers not to a long-standing affair,⁴² a motif otherwise unattested for the myth of Io, but to the popularity of the myth among earlier Roman epic poets, as it had been treated not only by Ovid in the opening book of the *Metamorphoses*, but also by Calvus in an epyllion apparently entitled *Io* (no longer extant but alluded to by Virgil in *Ecl.* 6.47–52).

Certainly the erotic vocabulary in the passage derives from Neoteric and Augustan sources, especially Ovidian elegy,⁴³ and continues in Valerius' account of Juno's recognition of Jove's deception: *sentit Iuno dolos curaque accensa iugali | aethere desiluit; dominam Lyrceia tellus | antraque deprensae tremuerunt conscia culpa* ('Juno perceived the tricks and fired by marital

39 Hinds (1998) 1–10 *passim*.

40 On the Alexandrian footnote, see Hinds (1998) 15.

41 Barchiesi (2001a) 131, discussing Ovid's reference, with the verb *referam* in the mouth of Jupiter (*Met.* 15.815), to the speech of the Virgilian Jupiter to Venus in *Aeneid* 1: 'the god's prophetic powers have now become more bookish than they were in the *Aeneid*'. So too the Valerian Orpheus' song is 'more bookish' than it was already in Ovid, Virgil and Apollonius.

42 Contra Spaltenstein (2004a) 293 and Murgatroyd (2009) 183.

43 See Pichon (1966) s.vv. *blandus*, *ignis*, *dolos*, *cura* and *conscia*.

concern leapt down from the sky; the Lyrcean land, its caves aware of her knowledge of the pair's guilt, trembled before their mistress', 4.354–6). The Valerian Juno's perception of Jupiter's deceit confirms the suspicions of Ovid's Juno (*Met.* 1.607–8) and leads her with unerring (literary-historical) accuracy to Mt Lyrceum (*Lyrceia tellus*, 4.355), precisely the site of Ovid's Io episode in 'Lerna's pastures and Lyrcea planted with trees' (*pascua Lernae | consitaque arboribus Lyrcea... arva*, *Met.* 1.597–8): the adjective *Lyrceus*/*Lyrceius* appears only here (and in Statius' *Thebaid*, 4.711) in extant Latin literature.⁴⁴ Juno's arrival is the catalyst for Jupiter's transformation of Io into a heifer (*tum trepida Inachiae paelex subit ora iuvencae | sponte dei*, 'then her frightened rival assumed the form of an Argive heifer, at Jupiter's will', 4.357–8), which the Valerian Juno recognises as her amatory rival Io (cf. *paelice donata*, *Met.* 1.622, *paelicis Argolicae*, *Met.* 1.726).

Valerius swiftly rehearses the Ovidian scenes of Juno's request for the beautiful cow, Jupiter's internal debate about the impossibility of refusal and Juno's consignment of the unfortunate Io to Argus (Val. Fl. 4.360–9 ~ *Met.* 1.612–24), but signals his departure from his Ovidian source in Argus' order that Io embark on 'unknown paths': *Argus et in scopulos et monstris horrida lustra | ignotas iubet ire vias heu multa morantem | conantemque preces inclusaque pectore verba* ('Argus bids her—still lingering (alas!) and attempting prayers and words locked within her breast—go on to crags into haunts bristling with monsters, unknown paths', 4.370–2). This untrodden territory marks not only Io's departure from her home in the Argolid but also the poet's departure from her literary history in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* at this juncture in the episode. For Io's inability to speak here is a sly reference to Valerius' muting of Ovid's vocal heifer (*Met.* 1.635–8). The Flavian poet also omits the lengthy lament Ovid puts in the mouth of Io's father Inachus (*Met.* 1.651–66), though he allows Io to kiss her father's banks (rather than his hands as in Ovid, *Met.* 1.646: *illa manus lambit, patriisque dat oscula palmis*, 'she licks his hands and gives kisses to her father's palms') on her departure from his familiar landscape: *ultima tum patriae cedens dedit oscula ripae* ('then, leaving, she gave her last kisses to her father's banks', 4.373). Valerius reassigns the lamentations of the Ovidian Inachus to the Argive water nymph Amymone and her Thessalian sisters Messeis and Hyperia (*flevit Amymone, flerunt Messeides undae, | flevit et effusis revocans Hyperia lacertis*, 'Amymone wept, the Messeian waters wept, and calling her back Hyperia wept with her arms outspread', 4.374–5), in a two-line Virgilian digression that reworks the natural world's lament for Eurydice in the fourth *Georgic* (4.461–3). Valerius acknowledges this divergence from

44 OLD S.V.

Ovid's account in his emphasis on Io's 'wanderings' at this point in his narrative (*erroribus*, 4.376; cf. *errore*, 4.397, *invia*, 4.400).

When Valerius returns to the Ovidian master-plot, with Jove's instigation of Mercury's intervention, he does so with a flourish of annotated allusions to his predecessor:

cum subito Arcadio sonuit cava fistula ritu
imperiumque patris celerans Cyllenius ales 385
 advenit et leni modulatur carmina avena
 'quo'que ait 'hinc diversus abis? heus respice cantus!
 haud procul insectans Argum languentia <cantu>
 lumina cuncta notat dulcesque sequentia somnos,
 et **celerem mediis in cantibus exigit harpen.** 390

... when suddenly the hollow pipe resounded in Arcadian custom, and winged Mercury, speeding his father's command, arrived, tuning his songs on the smooth reed, and said 'Whither away? Where are you going? Why, pay attention to my song!' Pressing close after Argus, he notes that all his eyes are growing tired from the song and sinking into sweet slumber, and he drives his blade in swiftly, in the midst of his song.

(4.384–90)

Mercury's sudden appearance in Valerius' narrative is prepared for by the Ovidian scene in which Jupiter commissions his son to kill Argus (*superum rector*... |...*natumque vocat*... |...*letoque det imperat Argum*, 'the ruler of the gods calls his son and bids him give Argus to death', *Met.* 1.668–70), and the haste with which the Ovidian Mercury there executes his father's orders (*parva mora est*, 'there was small delay', *Met.* 1.671). Valerius draws self-conscious attention to the speed of his own narrative, which tightly condenses Ovid's expansive treatment of Mercury's song (*Met.* 1.689–713), in his characterisation of Mercury 'speeding (*celerans*) his father's command' (4.385) and making 'swift' use of his special weapon, the sickle-shaped sword (*celerem*... *harpen*, 4.390; cf. *falcato*... *ense*, *Met.* 1.717). The Flavian poet gives only one line of direct discourse to Mercury (4.387), as opposed to Ovid's ten (*Met.* 1.689–99), but he imparts a distinctly Ovidian cadence to the Virgilian question Mercury asks Argus,⁴⁵ by attaching to the first word of Mercury's quoted speech the connective enclitic *-que*, which belongs, strictly speaking, to his bard's narrative,

45 Murgatroyd (2009) 197 *ad loc.* cites *Aen.* 5.166 ('quo diversus abis?') and *Aen.* 11.855 ('cur' inquit 'diversus abis?').

thereby reproducing a familiar Ovidian linguistic mannerism.⁴⁶ Valerius also comments knowingly on the precise moment that the Ovidian Mercury strikes Argus down in the phrase *mediis in cantibus*, for Ovid reports only the first half of Mercury's narrative in *oratio recta* (*Met.* 1.689–99), breaking off his story of Syrinx when the god sees Argus nodding off and continuing the rest of the myth in *oratio obliqua* (1.700–12). Even Valerius' choice of verb in Mercury's invitation to Argus to listen to his song, *respice* (4.387), seems pointedly meta-literary, inasmuch as it appeals not to the sense of hearing but to that of sight, and 'denotes various types of looking, especially looking back',⁴⁷ in this case to Ovid's famous version of the myth of Syrinx, half-told by Mercury.

This is also the mid-point of Valerius' Io narrative, which speeds up dizzyingly from here on. In an innovative twist on Ovid's version of the myth, Valerius records Io's metamorphosis back into human form upon Argus' death: *iamque reflecta Iovi paulatim in imagine prisca | ibat agris Io victrix Iunonis* ('and now Io had been gradually refashioned in her old image by Jupiter, and she walked in the fields victorious over Juno', 4.391–2). Jupiter's renewal of her human form, while short-lived on the narrative level, attests to Valerius' refashioning of her story in Latin epic (*reflecta... in imagine prisca*), and concomitant outdoing of Ovid on his own metamorphic ground. The sudden appearance of the Fury Tisiphone (*at ecce | cum facibus flagrisque et Tartareo ululatu | Tisiphonen videt*, 'but look, when she sees Tisiphone with torches blazing and Hellish lament', 4.392–4), however, precipitates Io's return to the form of a heifer once again: *in miserae rursus bovis ora recurrit* ('she returned again into the form of a wretched cow', 4.395). Tisiphone's epiphany is indebted to Ovid's description of Juno's instigation of the Fury to hound her rival: *horriferamque oculis animoque obiecit Erinyn | paelicis Argolicae, stimulosque in pectore caecos | condidit, et profugam per totum terruit orbem* ('Juno cast a shudder-provoking Fury before the eyes and mind of the Argive rival, buried unseen goads in her breast, and terrified the exile through the whole world', *Met.* 1.725–7), and Valerius emphasises his own retracing of Io's Ovidian literary history in his language of repetition and renewal here (*rursus, recurrit*, 4.395).

Io's second transformation into bovine form inaugurates Valerius' second redaction of Io's Ovidian narrative itinerary:

46 Kenney (2002) 42. McKeown ((1989) 26 on *Am.* 1.24) notes that 'although the device is very common in Ovid' it is not so used in earlier Latin or Greek poetry. In the same discussion, McKeown singles out Valerius as having a particular interest in the device: 'the usage recurs occasionally in later Latin poets, perhaps most frequently in Valerius Flaccus'.

47 Murgatroyd (2009) 197.

Inachias **errore** etiam defertur ad undas
 qualis et a **prima quantum mutata iuvenca!**
 nec pater aut trepidae temptant accedere nymphae.
 ergo **iterum** silvas, **iterum** petit **invia retro**.

In her wandering, Io is even carried down to Inachus' waves, how changed from her first incarnation as a heifer! Nor do her father or the nymphs try to approach her, and so she seeks again the woods, again the trackless wilds.

(4.397–400)

The complexity of Valerius' refashioning of his Ovidian source is visible as he both redoes and outdoes Ovid. For in a strongly marked divergence from Ovid's familiar version (*errore*, 397), Valerius' aimlessly roaming Io returns *for a second time* to the Ovidian location of her original transformation in her father's territory and flees it once again (*iterum*, 400 bis), retreating to the woods and trackless (i.e. untrodden) paths (*invia retro*, 400) espoused by poets innovating in the literary tradition at least since the Hellenistic poet Callimachus (*Aetia*, fr. 1.27–8 Harder). Valerius' insistence on Io's return to her father's stream signals his own close literary repetition, with a difference, of Ovid's master-text.⁴⁸

Chased by the Fury to Egypt, Io is saved by the Nile river god, who drives Tisiphone back to the underworld, as Jupiter finally steps forward to succour his erstwhile paramour and authorise her translation to heaven in the fourth and final metamorphosis of Valerius' episode. Orpheus' song ends, as it began, with a reference to the belated status of the singer, composing at the end of a long tradition: *Bosporon hinc veteres errantis nomine divae | vulgavere* ('thence the ancients popularised the tale of the Bosphorus, named for the goddess' wanderings', 4.419–20). Valerius' acknowledgement of the antiquity of the *Ur*-singer's song draws attention one last time to his pervasive debt to Ovid's Io episode in *Metamorphoses* 1 and its popular diffusion (*vulgavere*) in early imperial Roman material and textual culture.⁴⁹

48 Cf. Hardie (1993) 88–119, esp. 101–5 on 'Poetic Succession'.

49 On Io in Roman imperial wall painting, see Ling (1991) 128–30, with images and his Index s.v.; on Io after Ovid, both in Rome and in European art and literature, see Barkan (1986) 393 in the Index s.v.

Templum Solis

A final passage illustrates Valerius' command of the tradition and his special intertextual engagement with Ovid. When the Argonauts finally reach Colchis in Book 5, Jason is guided to the temple of the Sun by one of Medea's hand-maids (5.399–454). As the son of Phoebus, Aeetes is rightly to be found dispensing justice at his father's altar:

... **'Phoebe genitoris ad aras**
ventum' ait. **'huc adytis iam se de more paternis**
rex feret; hic procures audit populosque precantes
adloquiis facilis: praesens pater admonet aequi.'

'We have reached his father Phoebus' altars', she said. 'The king will come here to his father's shrine according to his custom; here he listens to the leading men and his subjects making petitions, heeding their addresses; his father, by his presence, advises him of what is right.'

(5.403–6)

So too Valerius, as the successor of Ovid, draws heavily on the Augustan poet's description of the palace of the Sun, the destination of Phaethon (another of Phoebus' sons) at the opening of *Metamorphoses* 2,⁵⁰ in the architectural setting of his scene:

Regia Solis erat sublimibus alta columnis,
clara micante auro, flammasque imitante pyropo:
cuius ebur nitidum fastigia summa tenebat:
argenti bifores radiabant lumine valvae.
materiem superabat opus: nam Mulciber illic 5
aequora caelarat medias cingentia terras,
terrarumque orbem, caelumque quod imminet orbi.

The Sun's palace stood high on lofty columns, brilliant with glittering gold and pyrex imitating flames: its gleaming ivory held the highest attic, while double folding doors of silver shone with light. Its artistry outdid its materials: for Vulcan had engraved on it the seas girdling the lands in their midst, the world and the sky that overhangs it.

(*Met.* 2.1–7)

50 On Valerius' debt to Ovid in this scene, see Wijsman (1996) and Wedeniwski (2006) 194–5.

The Sun's temple gleams similarly brightly, as befits the home of the sun god and political centre of his son Aeetes, who is also himself a direct literary historical 'son' of Ovid's *Sol*:

dixerat; ast illi propere monstrata capessunt
limina. non aliter, quam si **radiantis** adirent
ora dei verasque aeterni **lumini** arces,
tale iubar per tecta **micat**...

Medea's handmaid fell silent, and they hastened to broach the threshold she'd pointed out. Such radiance gleamed through the halls as if they'd approached the face of the shining god and the true citadels of eternal light...

(5.407–10)

Moreover, Valerius specifies that the artistry of the temple doors, like that of the Ovidian sun god's palace (*Met.* 2.4), is owed to Vulcan:

nec minus hinc varia dux laetus imagine templi	415
ad geminas fert ora fores cunabula gentis	
Colchidos hic ortusque tuens...	
...	
aurea quin etiam praesaga Mulciber arte	433
vellera venturosque olim caelarat Achivos.	
...	
...haec tum miracula Colchis	451
struxerat Ignipotens...	

And, pleased with the varied imagery of the temple, the leader of the Argonauts surveys the twin doors, reviewing here the origins of the Colchian nation... Why, Vulcan even engraved with prophetic artistry the Golden Fleece and the Greeks who would one day come seeking it... These wonders the fire god had crafted for the Colchians...

(5.415–17, 433–4, 451–2)

The radiance of the Sun's temple implies the presence of the god whose brilliance had overwhelmed the Ovidian Phaethon: *neque enim propiora ferebat | lumina. purpurea velatus veste sedebat | in solio Phoebus, claris lucente smaragdus* ('For he was unable to turn his eyes more closely [to his father]. Clad

in purple vestments, Phoebus was sitting on a throne shining with brilliant emeralds', *Met.* 2.22–4).⁵¹

Like the Ovidian Phaethon, the Argonauts find themselves unable to look at the sun god's halls (5.455), though not because of their brilliance but rather out of amazement at the proliferation of scenes inscribed on the shrine's double doors: *quin idem Minyas operum defixerat error | cum se Sole satus patriis penetralibus infert* ('rather the same perplexity of the artworks rooted the Argonauts in their tracks, when the Sun's offspring betook himself into his father's shrine', 4.455–6).⁵² Scholars have debated every detail of Valerius' ekphrasis, from the disposition of statuary (5.410–15) to the number of scenes engraved on the temple doors (5.418–51).⁵³ It is clear, however, that the subjects of all the works of art in the temple differ from those that adorn the palace of the Ovidian sun god (*Met.* 2.8–18) as well as from his courtiers (*Met.* 2.25–30). The god's halls exhibit statues of Atlas (*stat ferreus Atlans*, 5.410), *Sol*, *Luna*, the Pleiades and Hyades (5.412–15), while on the temple doors are depicted the Colchians' origins (5.418–432) and Jason's mythic career from Argonaut to bigamist (5.433–451). By contrast the doors of the palace of the Ovidian Sun are decorated with maritime gods (*Met.* 2.8–17), while around the god stand courtiers whose names mark the passage of time:

a dextra laevaue Dies, et Mensis, et Annus	25
Saeculaque, et positae spatiis aequalibus Horae:	
Verque novum stabat , cinctum florente corona:	
stabat nuda Aestas, et spicea sarta gerebat:	
stabat et Autumnus, calcatis sordidus uvis.	

On his right and left are Day, Month and Year, the Ages and the Hours disposed at equal intervals: new Spring was standing there, girt with flowering garland; naked Summer was standing there, wearing corn wreaths; and Autumn was standing there, musty from trampled grapes.

(*Met.* 2.25–9)

51 Wedeniowski (2006) 170 suggests that the disastrous fate of Phaethon (which is depicted on the temple doors in Colchis, Val. Fl. 5.429–32) anticipates that of his stepbrother Aeetes. Mark Heerink notes (*per litteras*) that the link drawn by *Sol* (1.526–7) between Phaethon and Aeetes (which is intertextually connected to the ekphrasis at 5.429) also points in this direction. Cf. Heerink in this volume.

52 On the reading *error*, see Spaltenstein (2004a) *ad loc.* and Wedeniowski (2006) 164 n. 526.

53 See Wijsman (1996) 199–204 for a summary of the critical debate and further bibliography. See also Manuwald (1998) and Wedeniowski (2006).

Despite the difference in subject matter, however, Valerius' decorative scheme of statues and inscribed temple doors seems structurally indebted to the Ovidian ekphrasis of the palace of the Sun, with its inscribed temple doors and temporal personifications in attendance on the god. Valerius thus reverses the intertextual poles of the poem's first ekphrasis, the description of the Argo in Book 1, to make the Ovidian architectural ekphrasis of the palace of the Sun the frame and Apollonius' Argonautic theme the decoration of Aeetes' palace.

Conclusion

Valerius' renewal of Ovidian diction, metrics and myth-making reveals both the extraordinary impact of the *Metamorphoses* on early imperial Roman culture and Valerius' own sophisticated exploitation of Ovid's larger thematic deployment of myth in his epic. This is in no way to deny or downplay the importance of Apollonius and Virgil (among many others) to Valerius' literary project in the *Argonautica*.⁵⁴ But even in this refashioning of Apollonius' Argonautic narrative, we can see the literary and thematic pressure that the extra-Apollonian (and extra-Virgilian) myths of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* bring to bear on Valerius' *Argonautica*—not necessarily to deform Ovid's vision, but to deepen and supplement the master's work by imparting a contemporary currency to it.

54 See the other contributions on Latin intertexts in Part 4 of this volume.

Lucan and Valerius Flaccus: Rerouting the Vessel of Epic Song

Tim Stover

Introduction

Although Valerius' relations to Lucan remained understudied for quite some time, the renewal of interest both in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* and in the Roman *Argonautica* has led to several important studies of Valerius' engagement with Lucan.¹ These studies have amply demonstrated that Lucan's epic exerted a considerable influence on Valerius' poem. The *Bellum Civile* has thus emerged as a significant intertext for the Roman *Argonautica*, one that can and should be considered alongside Valerius' more established epic models, Homer, Apollonius of Rhodes, Virgil and Ovid.² But what kind of intertext is Lucan's poem vis-à-vis Valerius' *Argonautica*? This chapter represents my attempt to offer an answer to this question.³ The first section briefly elucidates what I take to be some of the more salient features of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* that Valerius' text engages with. I do so by focusing on the collective suicide of Vulteius and his men (Luc. 4.402–581), an episode in which Lucan's iconoclastic and

1 See Schönberger (1965) 123–31; Baldini Moscardi (1999); Schenk (1999); Fuà (2002); Zissos (2004b); Buckley (2010); Stover (2012a).

2 On Valerius' relations to these Latin poets, see the contributions of Ganiban and Keith in this volume.

3 Obviously this question admits of many answers. I draw attention in particular to the analyses of Zissos (2004b) and Buckley (2010), both of whom produce stimulating and important readings of the essential function of Valerius' engagement with Lucan that differ significantly from my own. Zissos argues that Valerius' allusions to Lucan generate 'allusive irony', a process that often subverts and/or complicates the apparent meaning of Valerius' text by undermining patterns of thought inherited predominantly from Virgilian epic. Buckley suggests that Valerius' engagement with Lucan 'combines the appeal to a "traditional" Homeric-Virgilian epic narrative technique with Lucan's *Bellum Civile* to forge an innovatory approach to epic for a new ruling dynasty: an approach that *both* encodes a positive "new beginning" and signals its awareness that this is just another story in the cycle of Roman power—power gained via civil war' (434). My own views on this issue have been set out more fully in Stover (2012a), from which some of the arguments presented here have been reworked.

deconstructive tendencies are on prominent display, particularly in regard to heroism, glory and exemplarity. The remainder of the chapter then seeks to show how Valerius responds to Lucan's poetics of deconstruction. I suggest that Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, a tale of internal division and collective suicide, influenced Valerius' poetic program by providing him with a point of departure for his own epic undertaking. I examine the manner in which Valerius recontextualises the wording, imagery and themes of the Lucanian text in order to reroute the epic genre away from the poetics of deconstruction that he found in his predecessor. Broadly speaking, I argue that Valerius engages with the *Bellum Civile* in order to enact a poetics of amelioration and reconstruction.

Epic in Dire Straits: Lucan's Vulteius Episode

Perhaps no passage illustrates the most salient features of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* as the account of Vulteius' ill-fated voyage (4.402–581).⁴ In this episode a boat carrying a cohort of Caesarian soldiers is trapped by a group of Pompeian men, who place chains beneath the water in order to ensnare the vessel and cause it to run aground (448–64). The Caesarians are surrounded by Pompey's forces and at first they try to fight their way out of this predicament (465–73). However, they are eventually persuaded by the vessel's captain, Vulteius, to commit collective suicide (474–581). Several scholars have seen these events as dramatising civil war in miniature, such that this episode offers a microcosm of the larger war of which it is a part.⁵ I would like to build on this view by suggesting that the passage is emblematic of Lucan's poem as a whole: that is, the Vulteius episode is more than a microcosm of civil war; it is also a microcosm of the *Civil War*.⁶ It is thus a programmatic passage, analysis of which can establish what kind of epic Valerius inherited from Lucan. We can then examine how Valerius reacted to his epic predecessor.

There are several ways in which the Vulteius episode reflects the broader themes of the poem and its author's epic technique. Firstly, the auto-referential

4 On this episode, see Rutz (1960) 466–8; Thompson and Bruère (1970) 164–7; Ahl (1976) 119–20; Saylor (1990); Leigh (1997) 259–64; Hershkowitz (1998a) 212–14; Eldred (2002); Sklenář (2003) 26–34.

5 See Ahl (1976) 120; Henderson (1988) 139; Eldred (2002) 57–8; Sklenář (2003) 32.

6 This manner of reading Lucan's epic is best illustrated by Jamie Masters, who posits: 'to some extent, the poem is its own commentary: the actions performed within it (the subject-matter), and the struggles of its creator to narrate those actions (the "composition myth"), run in symbolic parallel' (Masters (1992) 7).

and programmatic qualities of the passage are pointed up by the fact that the events described here occur during the voyage of a ship. It is thus possible to see at work in the episode the metaphor of the 'vessel of epic song', whereby poetic composition is equated with sailing.⁷ This metaphor is activated by Lucan's repeated use of the term *moles* ('mass') to describe the boat (445, 453 and 462). On the one hand, the term *moles* is frequently found in metapoetic contexts as a tag for the enormity of epic poetry.⁸ On the other hand, this word gestures towards the quintessentially 'massive' nature of Lucan's hyperbolic poetic style.⁹ Indeed, like Lucan's poem as a whole, the ship that carries the Caesarians is a strange and unique construction that is not built in the usual way: *neque enim de more carinas | extendunt puppesque levant, sed firma gerendis | molibus insolito contextunt robora ductu* ('They do not construct long keels and lofty sterns as is customary, but in a strange line they bind together planks of oak strong enough to carry great weights', 417–19). Consequently, this bizarre construction moves in mysterious ways (425–6). At least it does so, that is, before it comes to a screeching halt (*haesit*, 454), as Lucan's poem so often does.¹⁰

The boat carrying Vulteius and his men runs aground at a spot whose dangerous currents surpass Charybdis (459–61). The reference to Charybdis does several things. As a whirlpool, Charybdis is a fitting image for what takes place on the raft: the Caesarians turn in on themselves in a suicidal death-vortex of centripetal motion, a theme of central importance in Lucan's epic as a whole.¹¹ Moreover, the reference to Charybdis evokes the epic tradition, particularly Homer (*Od.* 12.101–10, 234–44), Apollonius (4.789–832, 922–3) and Virgil (*Aen.* 3.420–3, 558–67) thereby putting the episode in famous epic company. Indeed, later in the passage Lucan compares the Caesarians' collective suicide to the mythical mutual slaughters of the Spartoi in Thebes and the earth-born

7 On this widespread metaphor, see Lieberg (1969); Feeney (1991) 318–20; Albis (1996) 43–66; Harrison (2007); Stover (2010). On its appearance in Lucan's poem, see Masters (1992) 38–9.

8 A classic example is Virgil's *tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem* ('So great was the effort to found the Roman race', *Aen.* 1.33). On the metapoetic charge of *moles* here (and in Valerius' *Argonautica*), see Feeney (1991) 318; Barchiesi (2001b) 351; Stover (2010) 646.

9 On this feature of Lucan's poetics, see the brilliant discussion of Masters (1992) 11–42. On hyperbole in the *Bellum Civile*, see also Martindale (1976).

10 On the significance of delay (*mora*) for Lucan's poetic technique, see Masters (1992) 9 and Roche (2009) 60.

11 On the centripetal nature of Lucan's poem, see Henderson (1988) 122–34; Masters (1992) 38–9; Stover (2012a) 47–50. See also Asso (2010) 197 on Charybdis as a symbol of hopeless inescapability.

men in Colchis (549–56). Given that the geography of the place and the events on board the boat recall well-known landmarks and events of the epic tradition, this episode is framed as yet another voyage of the vessel of epic song. But something has gone terribly wrong.

The deeds carried out on this ship are inspired not by *virtus* ('heroism'), but rather by *furor* ('madness').¹² The Caesarians could die fighting the enemy, but choose instead to turn against themselves: *versus ab hoste furor* ('their madness was turned away from the enemy', 4.540).¹³ Later, as Vulteius concludes his *suasoria*, he reveals the source of his desire for death: *furor est* ('this is madness', 517).¹⁴ Thus the episode recalls the programmatic significance accorded to *furor* in the poem's opening, where we hear of the madness of Rome turning away from *hostes* ('enemies'), and against itself in collective suicide: *quis furor, o cives* ('Citizens, what madness was this?', 1.8). Moreover, the Vulteius episode represents a radical example of *bella . . . plus quam civilia* ('wars more than civil wars', 1.1), since the enemy from whom the Caesarians turn their *furor* are not external foes, but opponents in a *bellum civile*. This is hyper-civil war indeed, as *one side* in a civil war turns against itself (4.548–9).¹⁵ The theme of suicidal madness, programmatically announced in Book 1, is thus not only reflected in the Vulteius episode, it is taken to extremes.

The predominance of *furor* on Lucan's ship of song has a debilitating effect on several staples of the epic genre, particularly on the concept of *virtus* and the traditional manner in which heroism is displayed in epic poetry, the *aristeia* ('scene of excellence in battle'). With their collective suicide, Vulteius and his men attempt to establish themselves as *exempla virtutis* ('examples of heroism'), but instead they emerge as models of *virtus* perverted by *nefas* ('unspeakable crime').¹⁶ Consequently, there is here a perversion of epic *virtus* that reflects the undermining of this concept elsewhere in the poem.¹⁷ In Lucan's epic world *virtus* is vitiated by civil war: *scelerique nefando | nomen erit virtus*

12 See Henderson (1988) 139; Hershkowitz (1998a) 212–14.

13 See Leigh (1997) 263–4.

14 On Vulteius' speech as a *suasoria*, see Morford (1967) 7–9.

15 See Sklenář (2003) 31–2.

16 See Sklenář (2003) 34: 'The suicides are referred to as exempla that nations will be too cowardly to follow. But the problem runs deeper: Lucan has just represented these same men as practicing on themselves the *nefas* of civil war. If nations were to follow their example, the consequence would be civic suicide in every polity on earth.' See also Ahl (1976) 119–20. On the issue of exemplarity in the episode, see Leigh (1997) 182–3, 259–64 and Seo (2011) 208–9. On *nefas* in Lucan's poem, see Masters (1992).

17 See Rudich (1997) 130–1; Hershkowitz (1998a) 212–14; Eldred (2002) 72; Sklenář (2003) 26–34.

(‘and *virtus* will be the name given to unspeakable crime’, 1.667–8). In addition to equating *virtus* with criminal behaviour, Lucan undermines the *aristeia*, the traditional means by which an epic warrior displays his valour by fighting against named opponents in a series of single combats.¹⁸ In Lucan, battles typically involve clashes between unnamed masses of soldiers.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Vulteius exhorts his men to engage in an act so spectacular that their *virtus* will be revealed:

conferta iacent cum corpora campo,
in medium mors omnis abit, perit obruta virtus:
nos in conspicua sociis hostique carina
constituere dei.

When bodies lie packed together on the field, each individual death is merged in a common account and heroic excellence, thus overlaid, counts for nothing. But the gods have placed us on a ship that is visible both to our allies and to our enemy.

(4.490–3)

In essence, Vulteius envisions for himself and his men an *aristeia*, a scene of eye-catching conspicuity whereby their *virtus* may be displayed. However, they fail to achieve this goal. The boat is reduced to a nameless pile of corpses: *strage cruenta* | *conspicitur cumulata ratis* (‘the raft is seen piled high with a bloody mass’, 570–1).²⁰ Although Lucan claims that this boat became more famous than any other ship (573–4), he immediately undercuts the exemplarity of the suicide: the Caesarians’ actions did *not* lead to any positive developments among future generations (575–81). Consequently, the events on this boat lead to nothing positive or instructive for Lucan’s readers. This example goes nowhere. The men thus do not become the glorious examples for posterity that Vulteius claims they will become (496–7).²¹ Their collective suicide emerges not as a glorious event, but rather as an infamous one, as they engage

18 On Lucan and the *aristeia*, see Gorman (2001).

19 The only real exception to this is the *aristeia* of Scaeva at 6.140–262, a scene that in fact turns out to be something of an anti-*aristeia*. On Scaeva, see Marti (1966); Conte (1974); Johnson (1987) 57–60; Henderson (1988) 125–9; Leigh (1997) 158–84; Gorman (2001) 277–9; Sklenář (2003) 45–58.

20 See Gorman (2001) 282 and Sklenář (2003) 33.

21 See Hardie (2012) 196.

in *totum . . . nefas* ('unspeakable crime in its entirety', 548–9).²² Here, glory is vitiated by the self-destructive nature of the conflict, these 'wars that will bring no triumphs' (1.12).

So what may the Vulteius episode tell us about the nature of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*? The deconstructive and iconoclastic tendencies of Lucan's epic technique are on conspicuous display in this episode: heroic *virtus*, the *aristeia*, epic glory and exemplarity are all undermined on this insane ship. More broadly, we see here that the vessel of epic poetry has run aground, trapped in the snares of civil war. It is unable to advance and, like Rome in Book 1, has given in to suicidal madness, turning against itself in a centripetal vortex of self-destruction.²³ Not content with merely deforming and subverting the various aspects of its chosen genre, this epic ship seems bent on destroying itself, and in the process on killing the tradition of which it is a part.²⁴ With Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, the vessel of epic song has come to a dead end.

As Lucan's most immediate epic successor, how does Valerius follow in the wake of Lucan's strange poetic voyage?²⁵ It is my view that Valerius seeks to reroute the ship of song away from the centripetal and deconstructive program of Lucan's poem. In contrast to Lucan's relentless focus on death, self-destruction and endings, Valerius takes us back to an originative moment, the sailing of the first ship, Argo, a cooperative venture of expansion outward into new realms. Along the way, the various aspects of the genre undermined by Lucan—*virtus*, *aristeia*, glory and exemplarity—are subjected to a process of rehabilitation.

A New Epic Itinerary: Valerius' *Argonautica*

Early in the *Argonautica*, Jason considers how best to respond to Pelias' tyrannical behaviour. One of the options available to him is to go to war with his

22 On the perversion of the traditional epic concepts of *kleos/gloria* in the passage, see Eldred (2002) 59, 70–1.

23 Although I am here concerned only with poetics, there is of course a political dimension to all of this: Vulteius' boat is more than just the ship of song; it is also symbolic of the ship of state. See Henderson (1988) 139 and Eldred (2002) 60. On the political dimensions of Valerius' engagement with Lucan in general, see Stover (2012a).

24 On Lucan's epic as a song against itself that attempts to 'kill' the epic genre, see Masters (1992).

25 Although the date of Valerius' poem is a contested issue, it is my view that he wrote the *Argonautica* in the 70s CE; his epic is thus our earliest example of a text coming to terms with Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. See Stover (2012a) 7–26.

uncle, thus setting in motion a civil war (1.71–3).²⁶ Jason, of course, does not raise an army to attack his uncle; the spectre of civil discord is canvassed as a narrative possibility only to be passed over in favour of another course.²⁷ Jason decides to embark on the voyage to Colchis instead. Consequently, the narrative that results from this decision—Valerius' *Argonautica*, a narrative of cooperative involvement in foreign conquest—emerges as an alternative to the divisiveness of an introverted civil war.²⁸ For Lucan, by contrast, civil war was the only narrative option available. In fact, Lucan cites involvement in foreign conquest as a preferable—but impossible—alternative to civil war: *heu, quantum terrae potuit pelagique parari | hoc quem civiles hauserunt sanguine dextrae* ('Alas how much of earth and sea could have been acquired with this blood spilled by the right hands of citizens', Luc. 1.13–14). Shortly after he has opted for the Argonautic expedition over civil war, Valerius' Jason echoes this Lucanian passage, thereby foregrounding a fundamental difference between this poem and its epic predecessor: *o quantum terrae, quantum cognoscere caeli | permissum est, pelagus quantos aperimus in usus!* ('O how much of the earth, how much of the sky it has been permitted us to know, for what great uses are we opening up the sea!', Val. Fl. 1.168–9).²⁹ Valerius' expansionist epic project is diametrically opposed to Lucan's narrative of contraction and collapse. Valerius' *Argonautica* is concerned with outward movement and opening up new horizons, themes which are emphasised by Jupiter early in the poem as hallmarks of his new regime: *pateant montes silvaeque lacusque | cunctaque claustra maris* ('Let mountains and forests and lakes and all the barriers of the sea be open', 1.556–7).³⁰ In choosing to compose an *Argonautica* Valerius was

26 References to Valerius' poem are based on the edition of Liberman (1997, 2002).

27 Although civil war is rejected as the central theme of the epic, it is nevertheless the case that instances of civil strife appear with surprising frequency in Valerius' poem: examples include the massacre of the Lemnian men (2.107–310), the battle in Cyzicus (3.14–361) and the war in Colchis (6.1–760). A full discussion of these passages is not possible here, but it is clear that in them we see an engagement not only with Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, but also with the recent history of the Roman state. On the war in Colchis, see Buckley (2010); on the Cyzicus episode, see Stover (2012a) 113–50.

28 See Ripoll (1998) 203.

29 See Pollini (1984) 52. For a very different interpretation of this verbal echo than the one offered here, see Zissos (2004b) 24–5. Zissos suggests that Jason's words foreshadow the Argonauts' participation in the civil war in Colchis; since for Zissos the Argonauts' involvement in this war is 'dubious', the echo of Lucan ironically subverts 'the surface optimism of [Jason's] discourse' (25).

30 The appearance of Jupiter as a character early in the narrative points up yet another fundamental difference between Valerius' epic and Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. As is well

able to take advantage of the expansionist nature of the Argonautic legend and the centrifugal energy that characterises it.³¹ This feature of Valerius' narrative reroutes the epic genre away from Lucan's claustrophobic and centripetal poetic program.³²

A crucial feature of Valerius' poem is that Argo is the first ship to sail the seas (1.1–2).³³ For Valerius the vessel of epic song could set sail anew, could seemingly go anywhere on this precedent-setting epic voyage.³⁴ Whereas Lucan's poem depicts a world coming to an end as Rome collapses in on itself (1.81), Valerius' epic takes us back to a new *beginning*—the sailing of the first ship, Argo—a moment characterised by the possibility of expansion into a new world of poetic possibilities. The first ship, headlining the first epic to follow in the wake of Lucan's poetry of collapse and suicidal self-destruction, constitutes a new poetic beginning. As I suggested earlier, in Lucan's hands the vessel of epic poetry has run aground and is thus unable to move forward. Lucan is unable to sing of collective movement outward, but instead can sing only of internal division as Rome turns against itself in collective suicide (1.2–4). Indeed, he vainly wishes he could sing a song of cooperative expansion, even if this was only a prelude to collective suicide (1.21–3). In Valerius, by contrast, civil war is rejected as the primary theme in favour of collective expansion outward and foreign conquest. If in Lucan's hands the vessel of epic song has come to a dead end, with Valerius we have been taken back to the moment of its maiden voyage.³⁵

In addition to being the first ship to sail the high seas, Valerius presents the Argo's voyage as the first epic adventure ever undertaken.³⁶ In so doing,

known, Lucan does not represent the gods as characters. Valerius, in contrast, has many gods participate directly in the action as fully fledged characters. On this aspect of Lucan's epic, see Feeney (1991) 270–83.

31 On the expansionist and imperialist nature of the Argonautic legend, see Braund (1993) 14–16 and Newman (2001).

32 On the claustrophobic nature of Lucan's epic, see Henderson (1988) 122–34.

33 This represents a divergence from one of Valerius' primary epic models, Apollonius, in whose poem Argo is not the first ship. See Jackson (1997).

34 On the ship of poetry metaphor in Valerius' poem, see Davis (1989) 48 and Feeney (1991) 318.

35 On Valerius' return to poetic origins, see Zissos (2002) 80–7 and Deremetz in this volume. For readings of Valerius' epic that argue that the initial optimism of the inauguration of Jupiter's new world order is subsequently undone or undercut by the events narrated in it, and especially by the seemingly 'tragic' nature of the second half of the epic, see Otte (1992); Hardie (1993) 86; Zissos (2004d); Buckley (2010).

36 See Feeney (1991) 319.

he maximises the inaugural, exemplary and precedent-setting aspects of the expedition. In fact, we learn early on that the Argo's voyage is a crucial element of Jupiter's plan for world history, which entails the gradual movement of power on earth from East to West.³⁷ As Jupiter explains the transferral of hegemony from Asia to Greece that he is setting in motion with the Argo's voyage, he says:

adcelerat sed summa dies Asiamque labantem
linquimus et poscunt iam me sua tempora Grai.
inde meae quercus tripodesque animaeque parentum
hanc pelago misere manum.

But Asia's final day is hastening onward and as she falls apart I am leaving her behind, and now the Greeks demand from me their time in power. Thus my oaks, the tripods and the souls of their ancestors have sent this band of men on the sea.

(1.542–5)

The 'now' (*iam*, 543) of the narrative present is thus an important first step in Jupiter's implementation of a new world order. It is important to examine the nature of this new world order, since it bears directly on Valerius' presentation of heroism (*virtus*), the attainment of glory, and heroic exemplarity, concepts deconstructed by Lucan, as we have seen.

Jupiter's plan creates for the first time the conditions in which heroic action and human greatness are possible.³⁸ Along with heroic activity comes the genesis of epic poetry, the record of the glorious 'deeds of heroes' (*facta virum*, 1.12). For the era that preceded Jupiter's regime—the age of Saturn—lacked *labor* ('toil') of any kind. This theme is introduced shortly before Jupiter's prophecy. Jupiter joyfully watches the Argo embark on its precedent-setting epic voyage: *siderea tunc arce pater pulcherrima Graium | coepta tuens tantamque operis consurgere molem | laetatur* ('Then the Father in his starry citadel is happy as he beholds the very illustrious undertakings of the Greeks and the beginning of so great a task', 1.498–500). These lines highlight the epic grandeur of the Argo's voyage and, self-reflexively, the epic greatness of the *opus* in which this heroic venture is being recounted by Valerius.³⁹ The Argo's voyage creates

37 On Jupiter's *Weltenplan*, see Adamietz (1976) 21–4; Schubert (1984) 22–44; Wacht (1991a); Manuwald (1999) 138–53.

38 See Feeney (1991) 319.

39 See Feeney (1991) 318–19 and Barchiesi (2001b) 351.

conditions suitable for epic *labor*, for heroic achievement and the poetry that heralds it. This constitutes a break from the past, since such activities were not possible during Saturn's regime, a time of indolence that Jupiter wishes to change: *patrii neque enim probat otia regni* ('for Jupiter does not approve of the idleness of his father's regime', 1.500). This statement underscores a fundamental contrast between the Saturnian age and Jupiter's new world order. The former was characterised by inactivity, whereas the latter witnesses a number of technological advances in human civilisation, including the invention of seafaring.⁴⁰ For Valerius the labour-intensive nature of the Jovian age has an enabling effect, as hardships create challenges that test one's mettle: greatness is only achieved by overcoming obstacles.⁴¹ Valerius' Jupiter emphasises this dimension of the new world order, citing his own heroic *labor* as an example for others to follow. As he addresses the Dioscuri and Hercules, Jupiter elucidates the purpose of *labor* in his cosmic plan:

'tendite in astra, viri: me primum regia mundo
Iapeti post bella trucis Phlegraeque labores
inposuit: durum vobis iter et grave caeli
institui.'

'Reach for the stars, men. It was after the wars with savage Iapetus and the toils of Phlegra that royal power placed me in charge of the world. I have established for you a pathway to heaven, difficult and arduous.'

(1.563–6)

Engagement in heroic/epic *labor*—such as Jupiter's involvement in the Gigantomachy (*Phlegraeque labores*)—offers a 'pathway to heaven', a means of achieving true greatness.⁴² In place of the indolence of the Saturnian era, Jupiter introduces *labor* as a defining feature of his new regime: by engaging in toil and persevering in the face of the difficulties Jupiter has deliberately created, mortals can attain to a level of glory that renders them immortal. In short, Jovian *labor* creates a space for *virtus*, which in turn enables individuals to accomplish glorious deeds and thus win renown. A good example of the

40 On Valerius' presentation of the transition from Saturnian *otium* to Jovian *labor*, especially his indebtedness to Virgil's depiction of the changes triggered by this transition at *G.* 1.121–46, see Schubert (1984) 22–5; Feeney (1991) 330–1; Wacht (1991a) 5–8.

41 See Adamietz (1976) 24, 120–1 and Groß (2003) 239–40, 248–9.

42 The Gigantomachy is often presented in Latin poetry as a paradigm of epic activity. See Innes (1979) 165–8.

concatenation of *labor*, *virtus* and glory characteristic of Valerius' epic comes early in the poem. In response to Jason's reference to the many heroic deeds the Argonauts will perform on the voyage (*nostros... labores*, 1.172), Acastus begs Jason not to see him as indolent (*segnes*, 175) but rather to allow him to come along so that he can display his heroism (*virtutis*, 177) and thus win glory (*famae*, 178).⁴³

The attainment of glory thus has an important function in Valerius' poem.⁴⁴ This feature of the *Argonautica* receives emphasis early in the narrative: *tu sola animos mentesque peruris, | Gloria; te viridem videt immunemque senectae | Phasidis in ripa stantem iuvenesque vocantem* ('You alone, Glory, fire their hearts and minds; it is you whom Jason sees youthful and immune to old age, standing on the bank of the Phasis and calling out to the young men', 1.76–8).⁴⁵ In this regard Jupiter cites his own involvement in epic *labor* as an example for his sons to follow (1.563–6, see above), so that they in turn may win glory and set an example for future generations, inspiring others to follow in their footsteps.⁴⁶ Valerius foregrounds this aspect of the Argonauts' mission shortly after Jupiter's exhortation to his sons 'to reach for the stars':

dixit et ingenti flammantem nubila sulco
derexit **per inane facem** quae puppe propinqua
in bifidum discessit iter fratresque petivit 570
Tyndareos placida et mediis in frontibus haesit
protinus amborum lumenque innoxia fudit
purpureum, miseris olim inplorabile nautis.

He spoke and **through the void** directed a **lightning bolt** that burned the clouds with its long tail of flame, which split in two near the ship and sought the brothers, the sons of Tyndareus; at once it came to rest peacefully on their foreheads and harmlessly shed a brilliant light that one day sailors in distress would pray to for help.

(1.568–73)

43 See also 8.391, where the Argonauts claim that *virtus* alone (*sola... virtute*) inspired them to make the voyage.

44 For a thorough discussion of *gloria* in Valerius' poem, see Ripoll (1998) 196–213.

45 In stressing the role of *gloria* for the Argonauts' motivation Valerius departs from Apollonius, who does not connect the voyage to the pursuit of fame. See Hull (1979) 382. Pindar (*Pyth.* 4.184–7) and Diodorus (4.40.1–5) also make the desire for fame a significant factor in the Argonauts' motivation.

46 See Wacht (1991a) 19–20; Barnes (1995) 273; Kleywegt (2005) 331.

Jupiter is thus sending his sons out on this first voyage not only so that they can win glory, but also so that they may blaze a trail for future generations to follow. The trail-blazing dimension of the voyage is made explicit: the Dioscuri will act literally as beacons which future sailors will use to guide their crafts through the seas (573).⁴⁷ Jupiter's desire to create conditions suitable for heroic undertakings is once again on display, and is in fact reinforced by a verbal echo of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. Valerius' *per inane facem* (569) recalls Lucan's *per inane faces* (Luc. 1.528). In Lucan, however, the phrase—which refers to a meteor, not a bolt of lightning⁴⁸—appears in a very different context: it is found in a list of celestial signs foreshadowing Rome's imminent destruction in the civil war. Valerius uses the phrase in reference to a heavenly light that will serve as a benefit to future generations, whereas Lucan employs it to describe a sign of coming horror, a celestial indicator of a doomed and hopeless future (Luc. 1.522–5).⁴⁹

The Jovian light that shines upon the Dioscuri in Valerius' poem highlights the precedent-setting purpose of the Argonautic voyage. The Argonauts boldly go where no men have gone before in order to pave the way for future generations, so that they too may be inspired to win glory, and even immortality, by facing the challenges that confront them. Valerius' epic world is one in which future endeavours—and, indeed, future successes—are being made possible by the Argonauts' actions. Jason's words to his companions before their departure illustrate the exemplary nature of their mission: *ite, viri, mecum dubisque evincite rebus | quae meminisse iuvet nostrisque nepotibus instent* ('Go on, men, and although the circumstances are doubtful succeed with me in accomplishing the kinds of things that will be pleasing to recall and that will urge our grandsons forward', 1.248–9).

Valerius' emphasis on the exemplarity of the expedition, as well as on the glory that the Argonauts can achieve by displaying their *virtus* in the face of the hardships Jupiter has placed in their way, stands in stark contrast to what we saw in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. There, *virtus* is equated with crime, involvement in civil war vitiates claims to glory, and the potential exemplarity of men such as Vulteius and his comrades leads nowhere. Another place to look for Valerius' response to Lucan's poetics of deconstruction is his revival of the *aristeia*, an

47 On the protection given to mariners by Castor and Pollux, see Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 153–4.

48 See Zissos (2008) 326–7.

49 For more on Valerius' attempt to ameliorate the concept of futurity in response to Lucan's focus on the hopeless condition of the generations following the battle of Pharsalus, see Stover (2012a) 30–46.

epic motif that intersects with a number of the issues I have been discussing (*virtus*, glory and exemplarity). Examination of Jason's *aristeia* in Book 6 will also allow us to see that Valerius engages directly with Lucan's Vulteius episode, the passage with which we began.

As noted earlier, in Lucan's poem heroic excellence (*virtus*) is vitiated by participation in civil war. I also noted that in addition to undermining the concept of *virtus* by equating it with criminal activity, Lucan subverts the traditional means by which an epic warrior displays his exemplary heroism, namely the *aristeia*, a scene in which a named hero fights against named opponents in a series of single combats. In Lucan battles are typically general melees as masses of unnamed men clash. In addition to the failed *aristeia* of Vulteius and his comrades, to which I shall return shortly, a striking example of Lucan's poetic technique in this regard occurs at 7.617–31. There Lucan foregrounds the lack of individuation that marks his battle narratives: he claims that it is shameful to trace out 'individual deaths' (*singula fata*, 618) when the entire world is dying. He then produces twelve lines of ostentatiously anonymous deaths and killings, which culminate in the following assertion: *mors nulla querella | digna sua est, nullosque hominum lugere vacamus* ('No death is worthy of its own lamentation, and we have no space to mourn for individuals', 630–1).⁵⁰

The best place to look for Valerius' reintroduction to epic of the *aristeia* is in Book 6, which describes the Argonauts' participation in a civil war between Aeetes, king of Colchis, and his brother Perses. In fact, Valerius invites us to read this civil war narrative with Lucan's text in mind: for example, at 6.402–9 Valerius assimilates the civil war in Colchis to Roman civil war in a simile, echoing the famous opening of the *Bellum Civile* in the process (Luc. 1.6–7).⁵¹ I shall focus on Jason's *aristeia* (6.575–760).⁵² Given the problem of *virtus* and the subversion of the *aristeia* in Lucan's epic of civil war, it is significant that Valerius recovers a space for truly heroic *virtus*, and that he does so by giving Jason a traditional—and glorious—*aristeia* precisely in the context of *bellum civile*.⁵³ Moreover, we shall see that Valerius creates a situation in which we not only witness heroism in the midst of civil war, but one in which we identify

50 See Gorman (2001) 271, who sees this passage as programmatic.

51 See Wijsman (2000b) 161–2 and Spaltenstein (2005) 121.

52 On the nature of the battle narrative in Book 6 generally, see Schenk (1999). Fucecchi (1996), (1997) and (2006) are also indispensable.

53 See Taylor (1994) 224. Valerius is also responding to Apollonius' depiction of Jason, who is denied a traditional *aristeia*. Apollonius omits the war in Colchis, although he does seem to refer obliquely to a tradition in which the discord between the Colchian brothers was given fuller treatment (3.392–5).

Along with Medea we too are being prompted to focus on Jason—the star of the show (*eminet effulgens*)—as he takes centre stage. We are being advised that we are about to ‘peruse the heated battles waged by the hero’ (*ardentesque viri percurrere pugnas*).⁵⁶ Valerius thus draws attention to his composition of Jason’s *aristeia*, a move that advertises his reintroduction of this traditional element of the epic genre, and invites us to see it as a corrective to Lucan’s subversion of it. Jason’s *aristeia* can thus be read as an act of poetic recuperation.

In fact, Valerius underscores his difference from Lucan vis-à-vis the *aristeia* by means of allusion. Valerius well knew that a bona fide *aristeia* requires the kind of conspicuity missing from Lucan’s battle narratives.⁵⁷ Valerius overtly acknowledges this early in Book 6 when he declares that ‘manly excellence confused in the general melee counts for nothing’ (*mixta perit virtus*, 200).⁵⁸ With these words, Valerius echoes Lucan’s Vulteius: *conferta iacent cum corpora campo, | in medium mors omnis abit, perit obruta virtus* (‘When bodies lie packed together on the field, each individual death is merged in a common account and heroic excellence, thus overlaid, counts for nothing’, Luc. 4.490–1).⁵⁹ Vulteius’ words read like a commentary on the ingloriously anonymous nature of Lucanian battle narrative. Unfortunately for Vulteius, as we have seen, his attempt to alter this situation fails: the boat carrying him and his men becomes nothing but a nameless heap of corpses (4.570–1). Valerius thus acknowledges Lucan’s technique only to reject it in favour of the traditional heroic *aristeia*, whereby a warrior displays his *virtus* and wins glory. Moreover, Jason’s heroism is not undermined because it is employed in the context of *bellum civile*, as is the case in Lucan’s poem (Luc. 1.667–8; 6.147–8, 262).⁶⁰ Rather, the heroism that Jason exhibits during his *aristeia* in civil war renders him ‘lofty in his heroic excellence’ (*virtute superbum*, 6.735). Jason’s eye-catching performance is clearly designed to impress Valerius’ readers, who, like Medea, are unable

56 On *percurrere* as ‘to read through’, see Wijsman (2000b) 230. For the notion that Medea is a ‘reader’ of the epic battle she is watching, see Lovatt (2006) 67–78.

57 It has also been shown that Valerius often employs ‘epitaphic gestures’ in his battle narratives, which allows combatants to stand out by being raised ‘above the nameless din of battle’ (Dinter (2009) 539).

58 For this interpretation of Valerius’ words, see Wijsman (2000b) 95 and Spaltenstein (2005) 67, who note that they refer specifically to the situation being depicted at this moment in the battle. For a different interpretation, see Zissos (2008) xlv, who takes the phrase to mean ‘men endowed with *virtus* die along with others who lack it’.

59 On the echo, see Wijsman (2000b) 95 and Spaltenstein (2005) 67.

60 Of course, not everyone will agree with my perspective. See especially Buckley (2010), who argues that the civil war in Colchis is a ‘flawed and degrading war that brings no glory to combatants’ (433).

to take their eyes off of him.⁶¹ Like Medea, we are meant to be captivated by Jason's martial prowess. The words Medea addresses to Juno as she watches Jason fight might as well be addressed to each of the poem's readers: *nam te quoque tali | attonitam virtute reor* ('For I think that you too, like me, are awe-struck by such great valour', 6.589–90).

In fact we are prompted to do more than passively marvel at Jason's display of *virtus*. Like Medea, we are encouraged to identify with Jason:

et, quotiens vis dura ducum densique repente
Aesoniden pressere viri cumque omnis in unum
imber iit, totiens saxis pulsatur et hastis.

And, as often as the implacable violence of the leaders and the crowds of men suddenly attack Jason and when the entire shower of weapons is sent against him alone, so often is Medea battered by stones and spears.

(6.683–5)

Since Valerius' readers see Jason's *aristeia* through Medea's eyes, I suggest that her identification with him is designed to induce a similar perspective for the poem's external audience. Medea's empathy delineates the desired response of the poem's readers.⁶² We are led not only to be awe-struck by Jason's *aristeia*, but also, like Medea, we are prompted to favour Jason (*animumque faventem*, 580), to have concern for his safety (*alit . . . curas*, 660), and to root for him to win.⁶³ We watch Jason's battles with partisan interest and, like Medea, we want him to triumph.

Jason's *aristeia* is an important aspect of the *Argonautica*'s response to Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. For Lucan *virtus* is vitiated by civil war. His subversion of epic heroism is exemplified by the perversion of the *aristeia*. Combat in Lucan's poem is inglorious and thus ingloriously anonymous. In contrast, Valerius restores the *aristeia* to epic, and he does so by giving Jason an impressive *aristeia* in the context of civil war. But in my view this context does *not* undermine Jason's heroism. For Valerius *bellum civile* and *virtus* are not mutually exclusive categories.

61 See Hershkowitz (1998b) 123–4.

62 For a discussion of how internal spectators shape a reader's response to Virgil's battle narratives, see Rossi (2004) 150–68.

63 See Lovatt (2006) 69.

Conclusion

For Valerius, the story of Jason and the Argonauts is about the birth of a new world, a world of seemingly endless poetic possibilities. The establishment of Jupiter's new labour-intensive regime enables heroic endeavours, thus allowing the vessel of epic poetry to be set in motion for the very first time, as it were. Within the thematic economy of Valerius' poem the Argo's voyage represents simultaneously the first epic undertaking and the subject of the first epic narrative. There is thus a coalescence of form and theme, according to which heroic activity and epic song emerge together in the new Jovian era.⁶⁴ Valerius' poem thus responds to Lucan's depiction of a dying world and his apparent desire to 'kill' the epic genre by taking us back to the very beginning, to the vessel of epic song's maiden voyage. This reorientation has an ameliorative effect on various aspects of the epic genre that had been deconstructed by Lucan, such as heroism, glory, exemplarity and the *aristeia*. In response to Lucan's poetics of deconstruction, Valerius offers a poetics of reconstruction. In Lucan the ship of poetry has run aground and come to a suicidal dead end; in Valerius, it is rebuilt anew in order to strike out afresh into the vast and expansive ocean of epos.

64 See Davis (1989) 48: 'The myth of the voyage of Argo is the subject of the narrative of the epic; Argo is the major theme. As a ship she also is the symbol of the poet's creative process of composition and its result, the poem itself. . . . A merging of form and content is thus achieved through the mediation of the mythic Argo.'

Valerius Flaccus and Seneca's Tragedies

Emma Buckley

Confronting Tragedy

Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* famously reasserts an epic mode that follows in the footsteps of Virgil, righting the wrongs done to it by the Augustan epicist's subversive and challenging successors, Ovid and Lucan. Where those authors had done away with the notion of a story centred on a single heroic figure, a figure to be judged against standards of martial glory and the potential to obtain everlasting renown (*kleos/fama*), the *Argonautica* rehabilitates this model, offering us a Jason who fits the bill as 'recuperated' *dux*, in command of an expedition guaranteed by Jupiter to succeed (*ratis omnia vincet*, 1.236; cf. 1.4).¹ Yet for all its 'fidelity' to Virgil, the Flavian *Argonautica* is always aware that tragedy is just beyond its horizon. Valerius' obsession with prolepsis and gloomy presentiment has long been recognised, and at every stage of the Argo's journey, the exploits of the Argonauts are set against tragedy-oriented backdrops as they encounter figures such as the Lemnian women, Cyzicus, Phineus and Prometheus.²

The linguistic influence of Valerius' most immediate tragic precursor, Seneca, on the Flavian epic has also been long recognised—in 1871 Karl Schenkl noted that Valerius was a diligent reader of Senecan tragedy—but the significance of the role Senecan tragedy plays within the *Argonautica* has not been explored in much depth.³ In this chapter, I will first start with the big picture, sketching the

- 1 On the *Argonautica*'s 'rehabilitation' of the epic form and 'recuperation' of Jason, see esp. Hershkowitz (1998b) 105–98 and *passim*; on recuperated poetics and generic form, Feeney (1991) 314–18, Stover (2012a).
- 2 On the *Argonautica*'s 'pessimistic' tone, see esp. Lüthje (1971); Burck (1979a); most recently, see Zissos (2003) (concerned that the *Argonautica* speaks to an ideological 'rootlessness' in elite Flavian culture) and (2009), conceptualising the *Argonautica* as 'aporetic repudiation' of any positive ideological drive or 'historical master narrative'.
- 3 Although Manilius (1889) omitted Seneca from his list of Valerian influences, Schenkl (1871) 271–382 and Summers (1894) 40–1 provide lists of correspondences and Mehl (1934) 109–19 offers further comment. For further evidence of linguistic influence, see the modern commentaries, esp. Poortvliet (1991a); Wijsman (1996) and (2000b); Fucocchi (1997); Perutelli (1997); Zissos (2008); Murgatroyd (2009). Grewe (1998) 173–4, the only specific study of

way Senecan tragedy operates in Book 1 of the *Argonautica* to adumbrate interpretative choices about the value of the voyage of the Argo, its socio-political outlook, and its narratological drive. Then, taking two specific examples—the *Medea* and the *Hercules* plays—this chapter will analyse Senecan intertextual presence in more depth. I shall propose that in these two case studies we can discern an intertextual role for Senecan tragedy that does not simply enrich our understanding of the *Argonautica* as a carefully wrought, highly artificial and mannered poem, but also suggests that Valerius is using a central generic tension between tragedy and epic to articulate the compositional ‘fracture’ the epic suffers, its division into ‘optimistic’ and ‘pessimistic’ halves, its fundamental ambivalence about the integrity of an epic *Argonautica* in itself.⁴

A Senecan *Argonautica*?

The *Argonautica* is a Greek mythological epic. But Senecan tragedy makes an important contribution to the conspicuously Roman milieu of the opening book, which situates Jason’s quest for *gloria* against a backdrop of civil war and sets a ‘fickle mob’ and impotent *patres* (‘elders’, but also ‘senators’) under the heel of the tyrannical rulers of Iolcus and Colchis. The wrathful, dissembling and treacherous Pelias and Aeetes have sometimes been compared to the later imperial figures of Tacitus’ *Annals*.⁵ But the angry and vengeful behaviour of

Senecan tragic influence (focussing on *Medea*—see below, pp. 313–19), offers full references to all scholarship on Senecan tragic influence; see also Buckley (2006) 132–93, (2013).

- 4 This chapter does not have room to explore other tragic influences. On Valerius’ possible use of Ennius, who wrote at least one *Medea*, see Jocelyn (1988). There are only two surviving fragments of Ovid’s *Medea*, while nothing at all remains of the *Medea* of Lucan. Nor has there been much examination of the influence of Greek tragedy, though Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides all wrote tragedies addressing aspects of the Argonautic myth (see Zissos (2008) xxvii–xxv for a comprehensive account of the myth, esp. xx on Athenian tragedy); for analysis of the influence of Euripides’ *Medea* and *Bacchae*, see Bessone (1998) 169–70; Buckley (2013); for *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, Poortvliet (1991a) 159; Frings (1998) 263. For the possible influence of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* on Hercules’ liberation of Prometheus (Val. Fl. 5.154–76), see Zissos (1997) 123–34 and p. 323 below.
- 5 Cf. Zissos (2003), (2009); on Roman tyranny and the *Argonautica*, Burck (1971b) 39 argues for similar ‘worldviews’ in Valerius and Tacitus, and at 48 for affinities between Pelias and Tiberius; cf. Preiswerk (1934) 439–40; Burck (1979a); Stadler (1993); McGuire (1997) 24–8 and *passim*. Hershkowitz (1998b) 246–7 sets Valerius’ tyrants against *Hist.* 4.86.2 and *Ann.* 3.71.4, 6.50, arguing that the dissimulating tyranny of Pelias and Aeetes is fitting for a work written in Domitianic Rome.

rulers, as well as the manner in which an individual can live well under tyranny, has already been a central concern of both Senecan tragedy and philosophy. And it has long been recognised that Valerius skirts such Senecan territory with the innovative deaths at the end of Book 1 of Jason's parents, who decide to commit suicide in the face of Pelias' tyranny, and whose choice of death refracts the prominent Stoic-heroic suicides of the early empire.⁶

Moreover, the voyage of the Argo itself has already been framed as Jason's only viable response to the deceitful machinations of Pelias, who has fabricated the need for the quest in order (he hopes) to get Jason, the legitimate heir to the Thessalian throne, killed. Valerius' Pelias, whose plotting against a family member in the quest to maintain rule (*regnum*) has all the hallmarks of the imperial intrigue of Tacitus' *Annals*, also looks strikingly like a Senecan tragic tyrant. Indeed, Daniela Galli has argued that in Pelias' display of 'fratricidal' hatred, one motivated by a mad lust for rule (*regni furor*), Valerius restages the conditions of Seneca's most famous familial-political drama, *Thyestes*, and his most famous tragic tyrant, Atreus, the deceitfully persuasive ruler of Argos. There, Atreus—another Greek who at the same time is a strikingly Roman figure, ruling over citizens who identify themselves as 'Roman' (*Quirites*, *Thy.* 396)—pretended to welcome his brother home in order to wreak a terrible revenge: Pelias stages his trap the other way, sending Jason off to destruction under the pretext of maintaining family unity.⁷

Valerius' *Argonautica* thus casts Pelias' vengeful politicking—the impetus for the voyage on the human level—as a variation on the Romanised claustrophobic court-intrigue of Senecan tragedy. A closer look at Pelias' role at the outset of the *Argonautica* reveals further clear evidence of Senecan tragic influence. In narrative terms, the *Argonautica* begins because Pelias has realised there are no monsters left in Greece for Jason to tackle, no potential for his young rival to perish at home:

sed neque bella videt Graias neque monstra per urbes
 ulla: Cleonaeo iam tempora clausus hiatu
 Alcides, olim Lernae defensus ab angue
 35
 Arcas et ambobus iam cornua fracta iuvencis.
 ira maris vastique placent discrimina ponti.

6 On Seneca's preoccupation with suicide, see Griffin (1976) 367–88; on the suicides of Aeson and Alcimedede in Valerius, see McGuire (1997) 24–8 and *passim*; Franchet D'Espèrey (1998); Hershkowitz (1998b) 132; Manuwald (2000).

7 On *Thyestes* and Pelias, see Galli (2002); on previous tyrannical versions of Pelias, see Zissos (2008) 98–100. On the 'Romanness' of Senecan tragedy more generally, see Tanner (1985).

But he sees neither wars nor monsters in Greek cities: Hercules' temples have already been framed by the gaping jaw of the Cleonian lion, Arcadia has long been protected from the Lernean hydra, and the horns of both bulls have already been broken. He decides upon the anger of the sea, the perils of the vast ocean.⁸

(1.33–7)

Pelias' machinations—prompted by Hercules' successful accomplishment of his Labours—mark a conspicuous difference between Valerius' *Argonautica* and his precursor Apollonius, for in the Hellenistic epic Hercules is only part-way through the list of tasks assigned by the tyrant Eurystheus.⁹

More significantly, however, this passage frames the tyrant of Iolcus not just as a second Eurystheus, but also, structurally speaking, as a double for Virgil's Juno. For in the *Aeneid*, Juno's interventions in Books 1 and 7 (sparked by her dominating emotion of wrath, *ira*), make her the narratological driver of the epic, providing a series of obstacles and delays to Aeneas' mission from the moment the disaffected goddess first attempts to extinguish Aeneas and the Trojans at sea (*Aen.* 1.37–49). Here in the *Argonautica* too we see Pelias set the epic in motion in just the same way Juno's wrathful intervention had already propelled the *Aeneid* into being.¹⁰ Moreover, there is an important intermediary between Virgil and Valerius for the 'hellish energy' of Juno's *furor* in the *Aeneid*. As A. J. Boyle and Alessandro Schiesaro have argued, Juno's wrathful, plot-propelling interventions serve not only as a vehicle to be harnessed in the infuriate poetics of Senecan tragedy, but also as a crucial template for would-be dramaturges within the Senecan tragic corpus itself—figures such as *Thyestes'* Atreus—who instantiate their own 'performance' of revenge.¹¹ And one particular Senecan tragic protagonist—the Juno of Seneca's *Hercules Furens*—clearly stands behind the reflections of Valerius' Pelias here.

8 The text is Ehlers (1980). All translations are my own.

9 Ap. Rhod. 1.1317–20, 1347–8. Indeed, throughout Apollonius' epic Hercules is an alternative or even antithetical model of heroism for Jason, rather than the complementary and exemplary figure of Valerius' epic: see esp. Hershkowitz (1998b) 114–19 and *passim*; Wright (1998) 8–53.

10 This is the argument of Feeney (1991) 129–87.

11 On the 'hellish' energy of the *Aeneid*, see Hardie (1993). On Seneca's recognition of the 'proto-tragic' force of the *Aeneid*, see Fantham (1982); Putnam (1995) 246–85; Schiesaro (2003) 32–4, 84–6. On the protagonist-dramaturge status of Seneca's anti-heroes, especially Atreus, Medea and Juno, see Boyle (1997) 112–36; Schiesaro (2003) 26–61. On the role of the Senecan prologue more generally, see Anliker (1960); Tarrant (1976) 157–61.

Hercules Furens begins with the angry lamentation of Seneca's Juno against another hated figure—this time not the Trojans, but her stepson Hercules—in a manner that clearly already reworks the beginning of the *Aeneid*.¹² The declaration of Senecan Juno that 'peace expelled, fierce pain will wage everlasting war' (*saevus dolor | aeterna bella pace sublata geret*, HF 28–9) recalls Juno at the outset of the *Aeneid*, plagued by fierce pain (*saevi dolores*, *Aen.* 1.25) and nursing an everlasting sense of injury (*aeternum servans sub pectore vulnus*, 1.36). And just as Seneca's Juno had reaffirmed her hatred of her stepson and her intention to wage eternal war on him, only to be brought to a stand by the success of the hero against her previous challenges (*quae bella? ... monstra iam desunt mihi*, 'What wars are there left? ... Now I have no more monsters', HF 30–40), Pelias' words at the outset of the *Argonautica* draw upon the crucial narratological function of the Senecan tragic prologue, utilising Pelias' wrath (*ira*) to set the epic in motion.¹³ While Jupiter will later claim responsibility for the voyage as the work of destiny (*fatum*) after the Argo has set sail (Val. Fl. 1.531–60), at the outset Valerius allusively contextualises the embarkation of the Argo as a kind of 'Senecan' tragedy, driven into action by an 'Atrean' and 'Junionian' tyrant.

The intertextual presence of Senecan tragedy thus adumbrates both the socio-political and narratological conditions which set the *Argonautica* in motion, combining to hint that it is not Jovian *fatum* but tragic *ira* that is the pre-condition for the epic. It can immediately be objected that such an interpretation clashes with the dominant tone of the programmatic first book of the epic, which showcases the Argo's voyage as a triumphant moment in the progress of the world. Evoking the *labor*-centred theodicy and 'progressivist' ethos of Virgil's *Georgics*, Valerius' Jupiter himself declares that the voyage will be a catalyst for the advance of mankind (1.531–60), before promising his sons the chance of apotheosis through epic endeavour (*labor*):

'tendite in astra, viri: me primum regia mundo
Iapeti post bella trucis Phlegraeque labores
imposuit: durum vobis iter et grave caeli
institui.'

12 See Fitch (1987) 116–18; Morelli (2007). The edition of Seneca is Zwierlein (1986); of Virgil, Mynors (1969). All translations are my own.

13 See Galli (2005a) for further parallels between both Virgilian and Senecan Juno here and the Pelias of Valerius' *Argonautica*; Eigler (1988) 32–45 on Juno's monologue. On Pelias as Eurystheus and Jason's parallelism with Hercules, see Zissos (2008) 101–2.

'Strive for the stars, heroes! Only after the war with wild Iapetus, and the Giant-wars of Phlegra, was I enthroned as King of the Cosmos: I have made the path to heaven hard and burdensome for you too.'

(1.563–6)

Moreover, and pre-echoing Jupiter, the prophet Idmon has already visualised the Argonauts' voyage as the stuff of victorious epic ('*praeduri plena laboris | cerno equidem, patiens sed quae ratis omnia vincet*', 'I see an abundance of testing toil: but the ship, able to endure it all, will win through', 1.235–6), in an echo of the confident *telos* to the epic promised by Valerius himself in the proem (1.4). Such passages—crucial in the reconstitution of a "traditional" heroism for the epic—link endeavour and courage (*labor* and *virtus*) with the notion that this journey is one for the advancement not only of individual heroes, but also for the progress of the universe itself as it shakes off 'Saturnian' sloth for the dynamism of a new Jovian age.¹⁴ Indeed, Jupiter will go on specifically to connect the Argo's journey—this epic quest using the ideologically freighted term *labor*—to a series of shifts in empires, which will, he strongly hints, culminate with the eventual domination of Rome.¹⁵

Yet this is clearly not the whole story, for there is an alternative traditional reading of the voyage of the Argo, prominent in the Roman tradition, which suggests that the Argo, by confounding the pristine natural boundaries of the world, merely sets in motion a chain of degeneration, accelerating the decline of man by serving as catalyst for his greed and propensity to violence. Such a view is central to Seneca's *Medea*, which includes two 'Argonautic Odes' (*Med.* 306–79, 579–669), which firmly place the blame for current ills on the overweening boldness (*audacia*) of both the first ship and its sailors, whose destruction of boundaries will pave the way eventually for the collapse of the cosmos itself.¹⁶ And while Idmon has predicted a successful voyage that coheres with Jupiter's predictions for the future in Book 1, Valerius also includes an alternative prophetic vision of the adventures of the Argonauts from another seer in this book, Mopsus (Idmon's prophecy: 1.234–8;

14 Cf. esp. Feeney (1991) 316–34; Stover (2012a). On the complex theodicy of Virgil's *Georgics*, see most recently Gale (2000) esp. 61–70; Nappa (2005).

15 '*arbiter ipse locos terrenaque summa movendo | experiar, quatenam populis longissima cunctis | regna velim linquamque datas ubi certus habenas*' ('As judge myself, and by shifting the centre of supreme terrestrial power, I will test what kingdom shall rule over all peoples for longest, confident to leave the reins I have granted in their hands', 1.558–60).

16 Cf. Boyle (1997) 126–7; Zissos (1997). On Seneca's pessimistic interpretation of the Argo myth more generally, see Biondi (1984).

Mopsus': 1.211–26). The counter-prophecy of Mopsus, a much more pessimistic, riddling and obscure anticipation of the future narrative, does not only repeatedly draw upon the language of the Argonautic Odes of the Senecan *Medea* to frame the journey as transgressive, unlawful, illicit: it also seems to offer a 'tragic' interpretation of the *Argonautica*, climaxing with an ominous instruction to 'wretched' Jason to rescue his 'little ones' (*miser, eripe parvos*, | *Aesonide!* 1.225–6). And Mopsus' final question—'Who is it that cleaves the air on winged snakes, steeped in blood?' (*quaenam aligeris secatur anguibus auras* | *caede madens?* 1.224–5)—is an enquiry that will find its answer in the later ekphrasis of Book 5, which looks beyond the scope of the *Argonautica* to Corinth, setting for the climactically tragic *Medea* 'who cleaves the air on winged snakes, steeped in blood' (*aligeris . . . quae secatur anguibus auras* | *caede madens*, 5.453–4).¹⁷

From the outset of the *Argonautica*, then, Senecan intertextual presence offers a shadowy counter-balance to the overt epic narrative, allusively encoding the possibility that the warning of Seneca's *Medea*—that is, that the Argo's journey is a crime eventually repaid by the destruction of the cosmos itself—will be the *telos* of the poem: a rather different endpoint than the one anticipated in the proem, which sees the 'end' of the *Argonautica* as the catastrophisation of the Argo (Val. Fl. 1.1–4).

Medea and *Medea*

From this perspective, then, the *Argonautica* incubates 'tragic' interpretation right from the beginning. Valerius includes traces, in typically allusive, mannered and oblique fashion, of the 'Senecan' attitude that the voyage of the Argo is a crime (*nefas*), and recreates the conditions for that voyage in the nefarious poetics of Senecan tragedy, the kind of narrative prompted and compelled not by fate but by *furor*. Five books into the epic, when the Argonauts reach their destination—Colchis—Valerius suggests that from now on, *furor* will not simply sit in shadowy counterpoint to the epic narrative, but will engulf it completely:

17 For more on the detailed verbal repetition here, see Zissos (2004d); on the influence of the death-profit motif of *Medea* 301–79 and *Natural Questions* of Seneca on Valerius, see Preiswerk (1934); on Valerius' doubled prophecies more generally, see esp. Malamud and McGuire (1993); Zissos (1999) and (2004d).

Incipe nunc cantus alios, dea, visaque vobis
 Thessalici da bella ducis. non mens mihi, non haec
 ora satis. ventum ad furias infandaque natae
 foedera et horrenda trepidam sub virgine puppem;
 impia monstiferis surgunt iam proelia campis.

Now begin other poetry, goddess, and sing what you saw, the wars of the Greek leader. I have neither the spirit nor the voice for it. We have come to insanity, to the unutterable pact with the daughter, to Argo shuddering at the presence of the monstrous girl; already impious wars rise from the monster-bearing plains.

(5.217–21)

This proem-in-the-middle, promising ‘other poetry’, does not just give us a list of contents for the latter half of the *Argonautica*: Jason’s marriage-contract with Medea and her decision to abandon her homeland, actions sparked by the help she gives in battling the sown men who rise from the dragon teeth on Colchis’ plains. It also tells us what kind of poetry is to come, the *furor* (erotic madness) that belongs to the realms of elegy and tragedy. In Denis Feeney’s convincing reading, the Argonauts’ contact with Medea will ‘elegize’ the poem to such an extent that ‘hypertrophy of the epic apparatus’ results; Andrew Zissos goes further, contending that, from now on, the *Argonautica* collapses into ‘an essentially regressive narrative pattern of tragic dénouement’.¹⁸

The importance of the ‘elegiac derailment’ of Valerius’ *Argonautica* has long been recognised, then. But less attention has been paid to the role tragedy plays in knocking this epic off course. A closer examination of the character of Medea (introduced to us as a ‘monstrous girl’, a thing of abhorrence to the Argo) will show that Valerius is not so much derailing as reorienting his epic, making the extra-narrative tragic future of *Medea*—the end of the love affair of Jason and Medea that culminates in infanticide—an ever increasingly loaded counterweight to the new beginning offered by the first Flavian epic.

Of course, Valerius already has exemplary models both in his chief source Apollonius and in Ovid (especially *Metamorphoses* 7 and *Heroides* 12) for play with Medea’s epic, elegiac and tragic roles. But while both Apollonius and Ovid flirt, in different ways, with what Alessandro Barchiesi has termed ‘future reflexive’ allusion, the second half of the epic overwrites Medea’s every move

18 Feeney (1991) 316–26 (quote at 316); Zissos (2004d) 342. Further discussion, along with helpful bibliography on the “dissonant effects” of this bipartite structure, may be found in Zissos (2008) xxx–xxxi.

with the already tragically complete future.¹⁹ Take our first sight of Medea in the narrative proper, setting out for the river to wash off the taint of horrifying night terrors she has suffered, a nightmare culminating with the sight of 'the boys' trembling at their impending death, and her own blood-spattered hands (Val. Fl. 5.329–40). While Medea is here retreading elegiacally charged steps already taken by Apollonius' heroine and their common model, the Nausicaa of Homer's *Odyssey*, Valerius' Medea has been forced out of bed not by a dream, but by a tragic dream-prologue, programme for the *Medea* tragedy.²⁰ Such metaliterary recall of the future is further bolstered by a more explicit gesture to Medea's dark destiny. The central ekphrasis of the epic—Vulcan's decoration of the doors of the Temple of Sol, a series of images centred around Colchian history that aims to match the central ekphrasis of the *Aeneid*, the Shield of Aeneas (Val. Fl. 5.426–51; *Aen.* 8.617–870)—creates a climactic image not simply of Medea in Corinth, but also of *Medea*, as Furies watch over a traitor son-in-law, Medea's poisoned gift to Creusa of crown and cloak, and the collapse of the palace into flame (Val. Fl. 5.440–50), a picture Martha Davis has described as 'a summary of the Senecan drama'.²¹

Alessandro Barchiesi has suggested that by removing 'tragedy' into the safe space of dream, prophecy and ekphrasis, Valerius manages to deal with a burdensome 'anxiety of influence', acknowledging—then avoiding—the overwhelming gravitational pull of past literary tradition. Yet, as we have already seen with Book 1, the 'tragedy' within the *Argonautica* is never really contained. And the particularly *Senecan* model of intervention we saw at the outset of the epic, the influence of a tragic mode prizing literary self-consciousness, figuring the protagonist as dramaturge, and creating anti-heroes who revel in an openly nefarious poetics aimed at accomplishing ever more awful acts of revenge, does indeed find its way into the text before Colchis.²² Take, as an example, the Lemnian episode of Book 2. There, Valerius positively wallows in

19 The phrase belongs to Barchiesi (2001a) 105–27. On Apollonius and tragedy, see esp. Hunter (1993) 59–63, 123–4; Nishimura-Jensen (1996); on Ovid, Hinds (1993). Bessone (1998) examines the influence of Ovid's *Medea(s)* on Valerius. On Valerian foreshadowing, see esp. Fuhrer (1998). Gärtner (1994) argues that the 'predictive' function of Valerius' similes is crucial. Grewe (1998) focuses on Seneca's *Medea* with Val. Fl. 5.231–77 and 8.414–46.

20 Perutelli (1995); Gärtner (1996) 300–2; Walde (1998) 89–92 (at 90 noting how closely this dream-prologue evokes the prologue of Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*). For further tragic irony in the first meeting of Jason and Medea, see Wetzel (1957) 161–2; Buckley (2006) 161–9.

21 See Davis (1989) 60–1; Manuwald (1998); Schmitzer (1999); Barchiesi (2001a) 137–8.

22 Barchiesi (2001a) 137. On the other major "tragic" episode of the earlier books, the night slaughter at Cyzicus (2.627–3.461), see esp. Garson (1964); Manuwald (1999); Sauer (2011).

a revenge-tragedy orchestrated by a Venus Inferna, who appears at the outset in a Fury's guise, black-gowned, blotchy-cheeked, and carrying a crackling torch (2.101–6).²³ Valerius' Venus-Fury—the very embodiment of a Senecan-looking 'Muse of *scelus*',²⁴ the crucial controlling force of Senecan tragedy—does not simply direct a perverse *Bacchae* at Lemnos, but, in her infuriate form, enacts it, appearing at the climactic point of the episode caked in gore, clutching a severed head, and conjuring up the sounds of men being slaughtered: a deception that inspires the women in turn to embark upon a true slaughter of their own, against their husbands and sons (2.82–310). In a passionate climax, Venus asks if she could abandon her city and children, and her immediate reply to herself is a self-reflexive pun drawing on the inspirational power of 'love': '*magnum aliquid spirabit amor?*' ('"Will Love not inspire something great?"). It is no surprise, then, that in her final gesture—*tunc ignea torquens | lumina praecipites excussit ab ubere natos* ('Then, rolling fiery eyes, she struck her children headlong from her breast', 2.183–4)—the Fury-dramaturge Venus does not only anticipate the *Medea*'s end—the rejection of her children—but also directly channels the infuriate power of the Senecan *Medea*. For the Venus who rouses the women of Lemnos is the same figure warned of by the Nurse in the Neronian tragedy: *magnum aliquid instat, efferum immane impium: | vultum furoris cerno* ('I know these signs of familiar wrath. Something great, savage, monstrous, impious is in the making. I see the face of Fury', *Med.* 395–6).

To take Lemnos as a very brief case study, then, the inset-tragedy played out by Venus against the Lemnian women is underpinned by her figuration not simply as 'Senecan' Fury, but strikingly also as 'Senecan *Medea*'. It should be all the more ominous, then, that when Venus returns to the narrative in Colchis, disguised as *Medea*'s aunt Circe and determined to force *Medea*'s submission to love, she is once again—as *Medea* herself dimly perceives—in appearance a tragic Fury:

'tu quoque nil, mater, prodes mihi; fortior ante
sola fui. tristes thalamos infestaque cerno
omnia, vipereos ipsi tibi surgere crines.'

23 On other tragic versions of the myth, see Poortvliet (1991a) 65–7; on the episode in Valerius more generally, see e.g. Garson (1964); Aricò (1991); Hardie (1993) 40–4; Schimann (1997); Hershkowitz (1998b) 136–46, 177–183; Buckley (2013).

24 Schiesaro (2003) 29.

'You are no good to me, my aunt [lit., "mother"]: I was stronger before on my own. I see grim marriage, and everything hostile; I see the snaky hair rearing up from your head.'

(7.248–50)

Medea's frenzied love for Jason, instigated by the divine assault of Venus, does not then simply read as an elegiac reprise of Dido's infatuation in the *Aeneid*, or her past Ovidian adventures. It also casts her struggle with duty and submission to *saevus amor* as a pointed prequel to her future Senecan tragedy, as the infuriation she suffers at the hands of Venus-Circe provides the template for her own future figuration as Medea-Fury in the Neronian *Medea*.²⁵ Of course, the terrified victim of the *Argonautica* may not, at first blush, seem much reminiscent of Seneca's Medea, the gods-displacing 'Explosion of Evil' who consciously becomes a tragic Fury in order to revenge herself upon Jason.²⁶ But at the moment the Flavian Medea decides to help Jason, committing her first crime (*nefas*) and accompanied by the Erinyes (7.461–4), Valerius marks the reiteration of tragedy by introducing a figure from Seneca's *Medea*, the "old" Erinyes who there "again seeks her unwilling hand" (*repetit invitam manum | antiqua Erinyes, Med.* 952–3), and recalling what had already been a 'familiar' Fury (*antiqua Erinyes*) in Seneca.

In fact Valerius flags this careful mirror-reversal of Seneca from the start. The final moments of the *Medea* pun on Medea's gleeful demand for anti-Aristotelian recognition (*anagnōrisis*) from her husband, alluding to her own famous literary history: 'Do you recognise your wife? This is how I usually escape' (*coniugem agnoscis tuam? | sic fugere soleo, Med.* 1021–2). This recognition-motif is now prefigured by the Flavian Medea's own descent into mad love, as she becomes entranced with the sight of Jason:

ut fera Nyctelii paulum per sacra resistant,	755
mox rapuere deum iamiam <in> quodcumque paratae	
Thyiades, haud alio remeat Medea tumultu	
atque inter Graiumque acies patriasque phalangas	
semper inexplētis agnoscit Iasona curis	
armaque quique cava superest de casside vultus.	760

25 On the notably sympathetic figure Medea cuts, see Wetzel (1957); Fucecchi (1997) 9–40.

26 The phrase belongs to Herington (1966) 449; on Medea's infernal divinity, see Henry and Walker (1967); Johnson (1988); Boyle (1997) 125–6; Littlewood (2004) 15–17.

As his followers resist Bacchus for a while during their wild rites, but then, primed for anything, are suddenly possessed of the god, with just the same turmoil Medea returns, and always, with unsatisfied longing, recognises Jason amidst the Greek battlelines and her own country's forces: his arms, and the features visible under the hollow helmet.

(6.755–60)

Of course, Bacchic frenzy is the defining feature not just of the tragic Medea, but of feminine *furor* in general. Yet there seems something peculiarly Senecan about the emotional state of Valerius' Medea here, for the hesitation (*paulum resistunt*) and possession (*rapuere*) of the Flavian simile once again are, in 'future reflexive' terms, an anticipation of the totally unrestrained Bacchant so terrifying to *Medea's* Nurse:

alumna, celerem quo rapis tectis pedem?	380
resiste et iras comprime ac retine impetum.	
Incerta qualis entheos gressus tulit	
cum iam recepto maenas insanit deo	
Pindi nivalis vertice aut Nysae iugis,	
talis recursat huc et huc motu effero,	385
furoris ore signa lymphati gerens.	

My child, where are you whirling yourself off to? Stop: control your rage, check your assault. Just as the inconstant Maenad when she—already inspired by the god—is maddened and directs possessed feet on the top of snowy Pindus or the ridges of Nysa, so does Medea rush all over the place unrestrainedly, bearing the marks of wild frenzy on her face.

(*Med.* 380–6)

This moment of allusive foreshadowing—encapsulating the insanity of Medea's first love for Jason precisely as the form of her Senecan hate for him—is just the start of a programme of interaction that collapses present and future Medea-selves.²⁷ But Valerius provides one final, 'Senecan', twist. As Venus has already been figured as a kind of Medea-Fury, so the infuriated Medea of the *Argonautica* is strikingly pictured as a Fury-Venus in the final episode of the epic. As Medea prepares for her marriage to Jason at Peuce, she dons Venus' own garments, the very clothes that, the narrator points out, will also burn on Creusa at Corinth (Val. Fl. 8.234–6): and in the very final scenes of the epic

27 Buckley (2006) 169–93.

as we have it, the Argonauts themselves now see Medea as an Erinys, and beg Jason not to allow this 'first Fury' to come to Greece, thereby drawing Europe and Asia into war (8.395–6).

Ahead of generic schedule, Valerius' Medea has prematurely assumed the status of a tragic Fury: by the end of the *Argonautica*, the gravitational pull of Seneca's *Medea* has overwhelmed the epic. As the poem breaks off, Jason is seemingly already in 'tragic' mode, attempting to placate Medea's "aroused anger" (*mota . . . ira*, 8.464) in a way all too reminiscent of his future vacillating and placating role at Corinth. And the anger activated in Medea here does not simply recall the familiar leitmotif of Virgil's hellish energy (*Aen.* 7.312). It also marks the absolute breakdown of epic predicted by Jupiter himself, when he abdicated responsibility for the *Argonautica* in Book 4: *i, Furias Veneremque move, dabit improba poenas | virgo nec Aeetae gemitus patiemur inultos* ('Go, arouse the Furies and Venus: the wicked girl will pay the penalty, and I will not suffer Aeetes' groans to go unavenged', Val. Fl. 4.13–14). It can, in retrospect, be no coincidence that at the very moment Jupiter decides to allow his epic to devolve into revenge tragedy, he echoes the rallying cry of the tragic Senecan Medea: 'Shall I suffer unavenged?' (*inulta patiar? Med.* 399).

Hercules and *Hercules Furens*, *Hercules Oetaeus*

Close attention to the role of Seneca's tragic poetics, and in particular the intertextual role of Seneca's *Medea*, reveals the potential to read a carefully plotted, ever-widening fissure within the *Argonautica* as the epic systematically devolves into tragedy. But the schism created between epic *labor* and revenge-tragedy in the Flavian epic is only ever present allusively. And even more strikingly, the *Argonautica* also embeds explicitly in its narrative another tragic model that offers a much more positive resolution, an innovative 'Prometheus Unbound' not present in his Hellenistic source. For Valerius makes *his* Hercules, after his loss to the Argonautic expedition, free the Titan who had been imprisoned at the hands of a tyrannical Zeus (the subject of *Prometheus Bound*). And this episode of liberation, an action that suggests the dawning of a new era of stability and peace in a universe controlled by a providential supreme deity, is, of course, perfectly congruent with the kind of era Jupiter had promised at the outset of the epic (1.530–61; pp. 311–12).²⁸ And crucially, when Prometheus'

28 On the connections between a new providential phase in Jovian rule, the journey of the Argo and the delivery of Prometheus (as well as his close counterpart, the blind prophet Phineus) from Jovian punishment, see Stover (2012a) 168–9 and below, pp. 322–3.

liberation comes at the hands of Hercules in the Flavian epic, Valerius once again draws upon the model of Senecan tragedy—now the *Hercules Furens* and *Hercules Oetaeus* to achieve the inclusion of a tragedy with a happy ending in the *Argonautica*.

Apollonius' epic does not make much of Hera's legendary hatred for her stepson Hercules (though see the hint at Ap. Rhod. 1.996–7), preferring instead to stress her role as Jason's helper. But in Valerius' epic, Hercules constantly risks being subsumed by Juno's tragic anger. We have already seen the "Junonian" figure Pelias cuts at the outset of the epic, scheming destruction for Jason: but this is reduplicated when Juno herself enters the narrative shortly afterwards, interrupting Valerius' epic catalogue to rail against her arrogant stepson, and wishing that the quest for the Fleece had been an order of Eurystheus, Hercules' tyrannical task-master (Val. Fl. 1.111–19). Worryingly—and in another departure from the Hellenistic *Argonautica* (cf. Ap. Rhod. 1.1317–20, 1347–8)—Hercules has in the Flavian epic completed all his tasks, the very situation which had provoked Juno's murderous and infuriate attack on the hero in the Senecan tragedy. And once again, the words of Valerius' Juno here have a distinctly Senecan flavour (cf. esp. Val. Fl. 1.119: *HF* 89; Val. Fl. 1.114–15: *HF* 43). Most strikingly, perhaps, Juno is *not* simply displaying her trademark Virgilian wrath (*ira*) here, but a distinctly Senecan-tragic emotion: she is mad (*amens*, Val. Fl. 1.111; cf. *HF* 107–11).

Juno's intervention to the 'provocation' of the appearance of Hercules in Book 1 is brief and seemingly harmless: she stifles her impulse to attack her stepson in the interests of aiding Jason, at the same time knocking the entire epic catalogue off-kilter. But when Valerius exploits the tension in Juno's conflicting impulses to help Jason and harm Hercules, he introduces a significant and sustained alternative plot—an epic-within-an-epic centred on Hercules—and at the same time opens the door to another kind of tragedy—the *Hercules Furens*—to take over.²⁹

Right from the beginning, then, the reader is aware that while Juno has one eye on the progress of the *Argonautica*, the other is concerned with creating a *Hercules Furens* for her hated stepson. And, as *vindex terrae*, vanquisher of infernal forces and saviour of humanity, a figure who is consistently compared with Bacchus and Apollo (the other sons of Jupiter who did service on earth before reaching heaven), the Hercules of the Flavian *Argonautica* bears a striking resemblance to the Hercules of the Senecan tragedy. It should come as no

29 On Valerius' treatment of Juno's dilemma in the *Argonautica* (torn between helping Jason and harming Hercules), see Hershkowitz (1998b) 159–60. On Juno's speech in Book 1, see Eigler (1988) 32–9; on the similarities of Valerius' and Seneca's Hercules, Piot (1965).

surprise, then, that Valerius once again recasts a traditional element of the Argo myth—Hercules' loss to the expedition, motivated by the loss of his companion, the boy Hylas, at Mysia (Val. Fl. 3.459–86; cf. Ap. Rhod. 1.1153–86)—as a kind of Senecan tragedy.³⁰ At Mysia, Juno does not only offer (yet another) tragic 'prologue', culminating in the promise to incite the Furies and the infernal god Dis (*mox et Furias Ditemque movebo*, Val. Fl. 3.520); she is also showcased once again as infuriate agent of revenge, opening up a reading of the following intrigue that recreates the Hylas episode as a kind of *Hercules Furens*.³¹ Of course, the narrative of Hylas' loss to the expedition—a bucolic-erotic episode in which the boy is ensnared by a nymph in an Ovidian-looking landscape fraught with danger for youthful beauty—does not obviously evoke the stuff of Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, the grim tragedy in which the hero, maddened by the Furies at the instigation of Juno, murders his wife and sons, then wakes to face—and live through—the horror of what he has done. But in another sense, Juno's wrathful revenge in this episode *is* a kind of *Hercules Furens*, for one of Valerius' striking innovations in the Flavian account is to re-form the erotically charged relationship of the Hellenistic *Argonautica* (in which Hylas is Heracles' *erōmenos*) as a *paternal* relationship in which the Flavian Hercules is first and foremost a father-figure to the boy.³² In a very real sense, the loss of Hylas is, for Hercules, the loss of a son: we are not miles away from the tragic territory of *Hercules Furens*.

Hercules' reaction to his 'son's' loss is thus a rather unsettling synthesis of epic and elegiac literary influences: but in Hercules' extreme physiological reaction to the disappearance of Hylas, Valerius also evokes a quintessentially tragic madness. Hercules' pallor, shaking, his breaking out into a cold black sweat, are highly reminiscent of the violent reaction of Virgil's Turnus to infuriation (Val. Fl. 3.572–5; cf. Virg. *Aen.* 7.456–62, 9.812–14); and as he wanders 'like a bull stung by the gadfly' (Val. Fl. 3.581–6; cf. Ap. Rhod. 1.1265–72), we might recall a long-standing tragic tradition that uses this image as index of infuriation, including the inspiration for Seneca's play, Euripides' *Heracles Mainomenos*.³³ Given these indications, when the Flavian epicist suggests that Hercules might do something awful (*luctu succensus acerbo* | *quid struat Alcides*

30 On the Hylas episode, see esp. Hershkowitz (1998b) 146–61; Heerink (2007).

31 On Juno's second speech, see Eigler (1988) 39–47; Heerink (2010) 170–7. On Juno more generally, Monaghan (2005).

32 Of course, some erotic elements remain: but see Heerink (2007) and Hershkowitz (1998b) 150–8 for the father–son recasting of the relationship, accomplished esp. through sustained allusion to the Virgilian pairing of Aeneas and Ascanius.

33 On the gadfly motif, cf. esp. Hershkowitz (1998a) 19–30.

tantaque quid apparet ira, ‘Inflamed by bitter sorrow, what might he do? What could such wrath equip him for?’, 3.585–6), we have been primed not just for a typically hyperbolic reaction, but for some kind of peculiarly ‘tragic’ response.³⁴ And the sudden onset of darkness, a descent into madness with Hercules running amok with his bow, a final collapse into unconsciousness—all already experienced by the Senecan ‘mad’ Hercules—together suggestively frame the Hylas episode as another *Hercules Furens* (cf. Val. Fl. 3.590–3: *HF* 990–5; Val. Fl. 3.577–80: *HF* 939–52; Val. Fl. 4.15–18: *HF* 1044–52).

The Argonauts abandon Hercules at Mysia, while he is still frantically searching for Hylas: the Tirynthian hero will play no direct role in the quest for the Fleece from now on. We have already heard Jupiter’s disgusted promise in response to this turn of events, revenge: *i, Furias Veneremque move, dabit improba poenas | virgo nec Aeetae gemitus patiemur inultos* (‘Go, arouse the Furies and Venus: the wicked girl will pay the penalty, and I will not suffer Aeetes’ groans to go unavenged’, Val. Fl. 4.13–14). And some earlier comments of his on the narrative disruption provided by Juno Inferna make the point even more sharply:

‘haeret inops solisque **furit Tirynthius** oris;
at comite immemores Minyae facilesque relicto
alta tenent. sic Iuno ducem fovet anxia curis
Aesonium, sic **arma viro** sociosque ministrat!’

‘Hercules, bereft, is stuck on the lonely shore and rages: but the Argonauts, unmindful and quick to leave their comrade behind, sail the deep water. This is how Juno, full of concern, looks after Jason, this is how she furnishes arms for her hero, and allies!’

(4.5–8)

When Valerius’ Jupiter puns on perhaps the most famous phrase in Latin epic, the opening words of the *Aeneid*, he is not just (in Denis Feeney’s taut meta-paraphrase) asking Juno ‘So this is your idea of how to run an epic?’: he is also offering a pointed critique of the *Hercules Furens* (*furit Tirynthius*) that he has just witnessed.³⁵ But while the Argonauts will, as we have seen, sail on to an overdetermined tragic ending to their story—*Medea*—Valerius provides a different opportunity for resolution in Hercules’ final act in the epic. For when the Argonauts have just passed through the Symplegades (5.154–70),

34 On Hercules’ trademark *ira* and violence in the *Aeneid*, see Putnam (1995) 170–98; more generally on Hercules, Galinsky (1972).

35 Feeney (1991) 324.

they overhear Hercules' liberation of Prometheus, and Valerius offers his singular heroic protagonist a final act in the epic, one that conspicuously prepares Hercules for deification against another tragic precedent, the climax to Hercules' mortal life and the beginning of his immortal one, recounted in the tragic *Hercules Oetaeus*.³⁶

After Hercules is abandoned by the Argonauts, his first instinct is to head to Troy, to collect his reward for rescuing Hesione (Val. Fl. 4.57–81, cf. 2.451–549)—a journey that, as previous accounts of the myth dictate, will end with Hercules' destruction of that city in response to the treachery of its ruler, Laomedon. But Hercules never makes it to Troy, for he is diverted (through the appeal of Apollo and Latona to Jupiter) to a new mission: the liberation of Prometheus.³⁷ And when Hercules frees Prometheus, Valerius once again plays with the notion that the journey of the Argo correlates with the evolution of the universe itself.

We have already seen the 'Saturnian sloth' so regretted by Jupiter in Book 1 give way to a dynamic world order in which empires will now rise and fall (1.531–60). But Valerius has already shown an awareness too that a much darker sense of a pre-Jovian civilisation might exist in the universe. Perhaps the most shocking example of such barbarity is the primitive Amycus, the king of Bebrycia whose savage reign is cut short by the arrival of the Argonauts and Amycus' own death at the hands of Pollux in Book 4 of the epic.³⁸ And Valerius is alive also to the evolution of a 'primitive' sensibility not only on the human plane, but also the divine one when he has Prometheus liberated by Hercules. For to recall the punishment of Prometheus is to recall the dark tragic universe of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, a world in which the supreme god's new power is secured by ruthless domination and tyranny, and the Titan Prometheus has been cruelly punished by Zeus for his services to mankind. To end the Titan's punishment is to signal that this time of cruel tyranny is now over: Jupiter will henceforth take a more benevolent approach to the governance of human affairs.³⁹

A complementary allusive effort aids this interpretation, and the debt Valerius' liberation narrative owes to a similarly Virgilian imposition of 'order'

36 On Valerius' 'Prometheus Unbound' see Liberman (1996); Tschiedel (1998); Zissos (2004d) 331; Stover (2006) 111–14. On Hercules' earlier liberation of Hesione, see esp. Hershkovitz (1998b) 72–8. In Apollonius' *Argonautica* (2.1246–59), the Argonauts sail past the Caucasus, see the eagle and hear the cries of Prometheus as his liver is torn away.

37 Cf. Murgatroyd (2009) 54–6.

38 On Bebrycia as a paradigm case in barbarity, see Hardie (1993) 84–5; Zissos (1997) 69–73; Schimann (1998); Hershkovitz (1998b) 79; Bettenworth (2003).

39 On the harsh world of *Prometheus Bound*, see Conacher (1980); Griffith (1983); Ruffell (2012). Zissos (1997) 123–34 analyses the direct influence of Aeschylus' tragedy on the *Argonautica*.

over 'chaos'—the Hercules and Cacus episode of the *Aeneid*—has long been recognised.⁴⁰ In a story recounted to Aeneas at *Aen.* 8.184–279, Evander had recalled the frightful conflict between Hercules and the fire-breathing, chthonic monster Cacus, which ended in the monster's death and the liberation of Italy from his murderous presence. When the Flavian Hercules frees Prometheus with a similarly hyperbolic evocation of the struggle, and appropriates the Virgilian-inspired complex of Olympian versus chthonic imagery, Valerius clearly signals the beginning to a Jovian world order that will culminate, as Jupiter had predicted back in Book 1, with Rome as master of the world.

There is, however, another important intertextual undercurrent in Valerius' liberation narrative. The rescue of Prometheus also contains significant echoes of Hercules' 'future' death and apotheosis-scene in another 'Senecan' drama, the *Hercules Oetaeus*. This Flavian tragedy, attributed to Seneca, examines the final episode in Hercules' career, as—unwittingly poisoned by his wife Deianira—he decides to burn himself alive on Mount Oeta, and after heroically suffering this immolation returns as a divine spirit to report his apotheosis to his grieving mother.⁴¹ Hercules' terrible suffering—including a crippling attack on his *iecur* ('liver')—is certainly Prometheus-like, and the hero actually compares himself to Prometheus as he dies (*HO* 1377–80; *HO* 707–10, 1222). Furthermore, as Valerius' Hercules liberates Prometheus, he is figured as a god-like being himself, a 'towering' figure (*arduus*, 5.160) whose assault on Prometheus' chains provokes a crash such as Jupiter or Neptune could create (5.160–4). We should recall too the consolatory words of Hylas to Hercules, who—returning in dream-form after his abduction—had promised that apotheosis would not be not far off for the hero (4.35–6). When Valerius' Hercules liberates Prometheus, then, we see not only the accomplishment of another *labor*, or a new stage in world history, but also the implicit recognition of Hercules' own path to deification, the resolution to his own personal tragic cycle. In our final glimpse of him in the *Argonautica*, indeed, he is now divine: figured in a simile, he banquets among the gods, finding support in his heavenly consort Hebe, handmaid of Juno (8.228–31).

40 See Hardie (1993) 83–7; Wijsman (1996) 94–103. On the battle in the *Aeneid* as imposition of order over chaos, see Hardie (1986) 85–186.

41 This tragedy, surviving through attachment to Seneca's tragic corpus, is probably written by a Flavian imitator of Seneca. Based on Ovid's account of Hercules' 'death' and Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, it is the longest play of classical antiquity. For more on the authenticity of *Hercules Oetaeus* and its themes, see Walde (1992); on *Hercules Oetaeus* and Valerius, Galinsky (1972) 163–4.

Conclusion

Hercules' tragic model of suffering and achievement thus serves to 'prove' Jupiter's instructions at the outset of the *Argonautica*, when he promised his sons the chance of apotheosis through *virtus* and *labor*: 'Strive for the stars, heroes!...I have made the path to heaven hard and burdensome for you too' ('*tendite in astra, viri: ... durum vobis iter et grave caeli | institui*', 1.563–6). Indeed, these words already contain that pre-echo of Herculean apotheosis, gestured at in Prometheus' liberation, for in *Hercules Oetaeus* the deified hero is finally able to proclaim: 'now my *virtus* has put me in the stars, and brought me among the very gods above ... virtue strives for the stars' (*iam virtus mihi | in astra et ipsos fecit ad superos iter ... virtus in astra tendit*, 1942–3; 1991). We might surmise, then, that while Valerius uses the Senecan tragic *Medea* to explore the extent to which the *Argonautica* can be dragged off into the overdetermined literary 'future', he is also mindful of the opportunity this Senecan (and pseudo-Senecan) drama offers to write the *Argonautica* as a 'triumph' over the Argo's predestined end. While Jason is doomed to play the tragic hero, falling ever further away from the standard of exemplary heroism that Hercules provides in the first books of the *Argonautica*, Valerius ingeniously uses the tragic model of the Senecan *Hercules* plays to provide an escape-route from that literary determination, and a narrative path that will prompt not only Hercules' individual apotheosis, but a new, Jovian-directed, world order in which, far in the distant future, Rome itself will be granted mastery of the world.

Valerius' sophisticated use of Senecan tragedy, in other words, does not simply provide a useful template to test the generic boundaries of the *Argonautica*'s potential as epic, exploring the consequences for the genre of *labor* when an already 'tragic' *Medea* enters the text. It also explores the reverse, when it creates out of its tragic 'Prometheus Unbound' the final heroic *labor* of Hercules, the epic means by which he will finally escape (at least as this *Argonautica* figures it) a tragic career of suffering and toil. Valerius' use of Senecan tragedy is, in sum, pointed, articulate and strategic. It works both with and against the other dominant allusive influences on Valerius, the epics of Apollonius and Virgil, challenging 'dominant' narratives, providing in-built alternative perspectives within the text, and opening up larger interpretative questions of the text. Senecan tragedy is not just 'there' in the *Argonautica*: it is at the heart of what the *Argonautica* is really about.

The Epics of Statius and Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica*

Ruth Parkes

In his *Thebaid* and the extant portion of the *Achilleid*, Statius treats the legends of Polynices’ attempt upon Thebes and Achilles’ youth. Yet the fame of the Argonautic voyage seeps out into these other myths. So in the *Thebaid* we find Amphiaraus recalling his past as one of the crew (3.517–21) and Hypsipyle narrating her encounter with the voyagers at Lemnos (5.335–498). Meanwhile, in the *Achilleid* the Amycus–Pollux fight is included in Achilles’ song (1.190–1), and Chiron begins to talk of the time he saw the voyagers Hercules and Theseus (1.156–7). Indeed, these *Achilleid* references contribute to the important theme of how far Achilles emulates (and might continue to emulate) the Argonautic crew.¹ Now it comes as no surprise that alongside traces of the Argonauts, we find traces of a contemporary poem, Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica*.² While the

- 1 Thus, for example, he emulates Theseus and Jason in his abandonment of a female (Davis (2006) 139–41) while following in the footsteps of his father in the rape (see below, p. 338, n. 69). Cf. also Heslin (2005) 184–7 on the parallelism between Achilles and Castor at *Ach.* 1.171–8. The prospect of love for an Amazon (Penthesilea) in Achilles’ mythological future might align him with Theseus. Chiron appears to be setting out parallels between Achilles and Hercules and Theseus at *Ach.* 1.156–8 but suddenly falls silent, thereby drawing our attention to the nature and extent of the emulation: see Parkes (2009b) 476–7.
- 2 The compositional time span of the *Argonautica*, begun in the seventies CE, is uncertain. It may well have extended at least into the early eighties but no later than the early 90s (Zissos (2008) xv). For work on the poem could not have continued after Valerius’ death, which is described as ‘recent’ (*nuper*) by Quintilian at *Inst.* 10.1.90, in a book written no later than 94, probably around 92 (Zissos (2008) xvii; Stover (2008) would place Valerius’ death c. 80 CE and hence composition in the 70s). Statius is thought to have died c. 96 CE and to have written the *Achilleid* in the last years of his life (Coleman (1988) xx–xxi). Hence the dependence of this text on the *Argonautica* is uncontroversial. Work on the *Thebaid*, assumed to be of twelve years duration on the grounds of a statement at *Theb.* 12.811–12, is usually dated to around 80–92 CE (Coleman (1988) xvii–viii). The majority of critics view the *Argonautica* as the *Thebaid*’s source text, though see e.g. the unease of Smolenaars ((1996) 151) about the assumption of the priority of *Argonautica* 7 and 8. See further Parkes (forthcoming). Note that Valerian intertextuality in the early stages of the *Thebaid*’s composition may have been possible without access to the full extant version of the *Argonautica*: Statius could have encountered

detection of verbal parallels is nothing new, increasingly critics are coming to recognise the dynamic and sustained nature of Statius' engagement with Valerius.³ With particular focus on overlapping content, such as Achilles' upbringing and events at Lemnos, this chapter takes up two current trends in the exploration of the relationship between the two Flavian epicists:⁴ the way in which Statius deals with his belated position and the nature of the intertextual process. Through examination of the manner in which the *Achilleid* plays out the consequences of Valerius' poem and the *Thebaid* indirectly treats familiar material, it highlights the self-consciousness with which Statius approached his epigonal status. It then explores Statius' technique of multiple imitation, which, as the *Thebaid* ambush and the *Achilleid*'s description of Chiron's home show, includes evocation of his Valerian intertext's model. Using the example of the *Achilleid*'s interest in abduction, the chapter goes on to suggest an area for further research in Statius' take-up of the *Argonautica*'s themes and motifs.

Following After

Both of Statius' epics are set after the Argonaut mission in time. In the *Achilleid*, for instance, Peleus is still alive but too old to fight (*Ach.* 1.440), while in the *Thebaid* a generation has passed since the voyage, as shown by the fact that Hypsipyle's sons by Jason have reached adulthood (*Theb.* 5.713–30). Some of the crew, such as Theseus, who is named as one of the band at *Theb.* 5.431–2, feature in the poem, but others, such as Hercules, Meleager and Castor and Pollux, are no longer on earth.⁵ Statius' positioning of the Argonautic expedition as something that has recently happened in the poems' memory is tied up with his own belated literary situation as Valerius Flaccus' successor.⁶ So, for example, the fact that the Flavian *Argonautica* had referred to Achilles' upbringing is exploited by the *Achilleid*. At Val. Fl. 1.268–70, Peleus advises

episodes of the work as they became available through means such as circulation or public recitation.

- 3 See e.g. (on the *Thebaid*) Stover (2009); Newlands (2012) 38–44; Lovatt (forthcoming); Parkes (forthcoming); (on the *Achilleid*) Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) 32; Parkes (2009a); Kozák (2013); Augoustakis (forthcoming).
- 4 Treatment of the *Silvae*'s use of Valerius Flaccus lies outside the scope of this paper.
- 5 See e.g. *Theb.* 4.158 (the god Hercules); 4.103 (the death of Meleager); 7.792–3; 8.49–50; 10.500–2 (the afterlife of Castor and Pollux).
- 6 For the *Achilleid*'s play with its post-Valerian position, see Kozák (2013) (taking up work on belatedness by Hinds (1998) and Feeney (2004)).

Chiron on his son's education. He hopes the Centaur will train him in hunting (Val. Fl. 1.269–70), commonly regarded as propaedeutic for war. And, in a gesture to Achilles' Iliadic future where he wields his father's spear,⁷ Peleus is also shown urging the Centaur to instill in the boy the desire to follow in his father's military footsteps: 'let him hasten to wield my spear' (*nostram festinet ad hastam*, Val. Fl. 1.270).⁸ The *Achilleid* reveals that the Valerian Peleus' wishes have been followed:⁹ Achilles boasts that even as a child he bore arms and quivers (*Ach.* 2.106) and that his love of iron was 'accelerated' (*properatus*, 2.107),¹⁰ while at *Ach.* 1.41 we see Achilles measuring himself against his father's spear (*patria... se metitur in hasta*). It is this training that directs Achilles onto the path which leads to his doom. Prompted to snatch the shield and spear brought by Ulysses and thereby reveal himself, he will end up in the *Iliad* (19.373–80, 387–91) arming himself with another shield and Peleus' spear at Troy before re-entering the conflict. Statius thus exploits the literary and mythological priority of the Valerian text to conjure a sense of inevitability. The consequences of actions from the Valerian past are displayed, just as they are shown further down the line in the Valerian and Statian 'sequel', the *Iliad*.¹¹

A more combative approach to the chronological priority of Valerius' poem, which perhaps articulates the anxieties of influence, is displayed elsewhere. Even when Statius engages in close verbal imitation, he frequently corrects details of his source. So, for instance, at *Ach.* 1.23–4 we hear of Paris' crossing of the Hellespont, the place 'where Helle... a Nereid hidden in the sea, rules the hateful waves' (*qua condita ponto | fluctibus invisit... Nereis imperat Helle*, *Ach.* 1.23–4). Thetis is shown leaving her ocean chambers accompanied by her Nereid sisters, a gathering said to overcrowd the narrow waters: 'the meeting shores of Phrixus swarm, and the straitened sea has no space for its mistresses' (*fervent coeuntia Phrixi | litora et angustum dominas non explicat aequor*, *Ach.* 1.28–9). Such a picture looks to Valerius' description of the Argonauts' entry onto the Hellespont: 'they entered Phrixus' sea and the narrow straits that once had no name' (*Phruxea subibant | aequora et angustas quondam sine nomine fauces*, Val. Fl. 2.585–6). Statius, however, alters his predecessor's account: whereas the Valerian Helle presents herself as happy in her environ-

7 See Zissos (2008) 211–12.

8 All translations are my own.

9 See Parkes (2009a) 112–13.

10 With *festinet*, cf. also *Ach.* 1.148, *vis festina* (Kozák (2013) 257). For the love of iron, see Pind. *Nem.* 3.45 (Jamset (2004) 78).

11 See Parkes (2009a); Augoustakis (forthcoming) for Statius. For the *Iliad* as the *Argonautica*'s 'sequel', see Zissos (2008) xl–xliii.

ment, the Statian Helle is depicted as resentful of her role as a Nereid and therefore a fellow sister and companion of Thetis.¹²

Correction at a yet deeper level is clear in those episodes where Statius has chosen overlapping subject matter. At *Theb.* 5.335–485 Hypsipyle recalls the Argonauts' sojourn at Lemnos following an arrival in which they were hampered by weather and an attack by the Lemnian women. Such fixation with history goes back at least as far as Hypsipyle's Euripidean days where her response to the chorus' query as to whether she is following her usual practice of singing of the Argo (*Eur. Hyps.* 752f.19–21 Collard–Cropp) is to recollect the Argonauts' arrival in Nemea (*Eur. Hyps.* 752g.1–14 Collard–Cropp). But, as we shall see, Hypsipyle's narrative is in part a recollection of the Valerian, as well as the Euripidean, past. The fact that this past is related as a story within a story both self-consciously gestures to its 'second-hand' origins and sets up a literary challenge. The way Statius' massacre narrative departs from the *Thebaid's* usual practice in its use of a traditional deity to guide the action has been seen by Feeney as a response to the Flavian *Argonautica*: Valerius Flaccus is 'marked as the old-fashioned narrator, left behind in parenthesis by Statius' innovations'.¹³ Feeney's comment may be applied more generally to Statius' approach to the Valerian Argonautic material.¹⁴ In her Euripidean way, Hypsipyle sings an *Argonautica*. However, as a compressed story within a story with affiliations to Callimachus' *Hecale* and the neoteric epyllion Catullus 64, it is an *Argonautica* of a different kind to Valerius'.¹⁵ Achilles' song, related Alexandrian-style as a series of Argonaut-related topics, is similarly presented as an *Argonautica* of another sort, eschewing Valerius' literal-minded emulation of Apollonius.¹⁶ As evidenced by Virgil's sneering reference at *G.* 3.6 to the hackneyed poetic theme of the tale of Hylas and Statius' own inclusion of the Argo among tired topics at *Silv.* 2.7.48–51, the matter of the Argonautic myth was vulnerable to

12 So Augoustakis (forthcoming). Cf. Kozák (2013) 248.

13 Feeney (1991) 376.

14 The *Argonautica's* poetics are complex (see e.g. Heerink (forthcoming b) ch. 4 for the Valerian Hylas as a vehicle for 'Callimachean' poetics) and recognised by Statius. His reworking of the Valerian appropriation of Catullus 64 (on which see below, p. 334), for instance, reveals his awareness of the epic's capacity for literary sophistication. Statius is here simplifying the *Argonautica's* poetics for his own purposes. See further on a polemical stance towards Valerius Flaccus' poem: (on the *Thebaid*) Vessey (1970) 52; La Penna (1981) 248–9; Aricò (1991) 199; Gibson (2004) 166; Zissos (2006b) 166; Stover (2009) 451–2 n. 32, 453 n. 39; Newlands (2012) 41–4; (on the *Silvae*) Vessey (1970) 51–2; Gibson (2004) 152–3.

15 Cf. Heslin (2005) 92.

16 Cf. Heslin (2005) 91–2.

the charge of overfamiliarity. Statius' indirect treatment of the legend through characters' anecdotes and reminiscences can be seen not only as a response to a potentially burdensome tradition generally, but also specifically as a side-swipe at the contemporary *Argonautica*, which could be viewed as allying familiar material with a traditional narrative approach. The oblique neoteric-style narrative gestures offer Statius the freedom to treat Argonautic material at the same time as they enable him to avoid retracing a conventional route along the narrative path of Argonautic texts such as that of his Flavian rival.

Multiple Imitation

With his allusive practice typically characterised by multiple imitation, Statius is wont to allude to Valerius Flaccus alongside other texts.¹⁷ We have seen how Hypsipyle's recollection of the Argonauts' stay at Lemnos (*Theb.* 5.335–485) looks to Euripides' play *Hypsipyle*. Alongside Statius' engagement with this tragedy,¹⁸ there is clear allusion to Valerius' *Argonautica*, which was already an important intertext in Hypsipyle's preceding account of the island massacre (*Theb.* 5.28–334).¹⁹ The exclamatory *ecce* ('see', *Theb.* 5.335) which introduces Hypsipyle's reminiscence of the ship's arrival at Lemnos picks up the *ecce* which signals the Lemnians' sight of the vessel as it is rowed to shore at Val. Fl. 2.311. At *Theb.* 5.338–45 Hypsipyle goes on to contrast a gigantomachic image of the Argo propelled by its rowers ('you would think Ortygia was on the move, torn from her roots, or that a broken mountain was travelling over the sea', *Theb.* 5.338–9)²⁰ with a picture of the oars at rest, when Orpheus' song could be heard.²¹ While the allusion to a singing Orpheus primarily looks to Hypsipyle's recollection of the Euripidean Orpheus (Eur. *Hyps.* 752g.8–14 Collard–Cropp),²² the reference to the bard's ability to make his companions forget their *labores* ('toils', *Theb.* 5.345) through song picks up the Valerian Orpheus' banishment of

17 See the important observations by Smolenaars (1994), especially xvii and xxvi–xlii.

18 See e.g. Aricò (1972) 85–98; Brown (1994) 65–6, 76–8, 94, 98, 106–8; Newlands (2012) 42 (who considers it alongside the Valerian intertext).

19 Cf. this passage with Val. Fl. 2.78–310. See e.g. Harper Smith (1987) 45–6; Aricò (1991); Zissos (2006b) 166 n. 5.

20 *Theb.* 5.338–9, *abruptam credas radicibus ire | Ortygiam aut fractum pelago decurrere montem*.

21 *Theb.* 5.340–5. Zissos (2006b) 166 n. 5 suggests that lines 346–7 evoke Val. Fl. 1.1–4.

22 Cf. Aricò (1972) 91–2.

labor at Val. Fl. 4.89.²³ Furthermore, although the immediate referent for lines 338–9 is the *Aeneid*'s description of the Actium sea battle ('you would think that the Cyclades, uprooted, were floating on the sea or that high mountains were clashing with mountains', *Aen.* 8.691–2),²⁴ such characterisation surely also gestures to the gigantomachic language deployed by Valerius in his depiction of the storm faced by the first ship at 1.574–692.²⁵ For the tempest in which Statius shows his Argonauts arriving (*Theb.* 5.361–421)²⁶ evokes this storm encountered by the Valerian Argonauts at the start of their voyage: the Statian crew appear to be still dogged by the turbulent conditions they experienced upon first setting sail in Valerius' *Argonautica*. So, for example, lines 373–5 (*puppem... insana flagellat | arbor et instabili procumbens pondere curvas | raptat aquas*, 'the demented mast lashes the vessel and falling forward with its unstable weight snatches the arching waves') contains the evocation of a Valerian phrase, *insanam... ratem* ('insane vessel', Val. Fl. 1.605),²⁷ at the same time as speaking to the description at Val. Fl. 1.623–4, 'the yard-arm, dipping to port, tossed up the gaping waves with its tip'.²⁸ Moreover, the comment that the *robora* ('strength') of the demigod heroes is of no help (*nec... prosunt*, *Theb.* 5.372) in the storm nods to Valerius' observation that as Hercules faced the prospect of a nautical death, he 'looked at his useless club' (*spectat... inutile robur*, Val. Fl. 1.634).

Statius' employment of multiple references may have hindered recognition of his engagement with Valerius. Certainly another feature of Statius' intertextuality, his tendency to allude to an *Argonautica* passage alongside the very text(s) drawn upon by that scene, demands vigilance from his readers. Evidence of this practice can be seen at *Theb.* 2.482–743, where Statius evokes the Ovidian Centaur–Lapith fight (*Met.* 12.210–535) in order to point up the

23 For another Valerian-inspired portrayal, cf. Val. Fl. 1.107–11 (of Hylas) with *Theb.* 5.441–4 (Zissos (2008) 142; Heerink (forthcoming b)). For the impact of Valerius' portrayal of Hylas on *Silv.* 3.4, see van Dam (2006) 199–200.

24 *pelago credas innare revulsas | Cycladas aut montis concurrere montibus altos*. Cf. Hardie (1986) 100–1.

25 For Valerius' rhetorical use of Gigantomachy in this episode, see Zissos (2006a); Stover (2012a) 79–111 (an attempt to distance the Argonauts from gigantomachic associations).

26 Valerius' only storm in Book 2 is the wintry weather of 2.365–9 which delays the Argonauts' departure. Statius may nod to this in his reference to the calming of the sea at *Theb.* 5.468–9, especially since his claim that the south wind 'calls' (469, *vocat*) the sails evokes the zephyrs 'calling' (Val. Fl. 2.372, *vocantes*) the Argonauts: see Harper Smith (1987), 46 (arguing, however, that Statius' recollection of Valerius was here unintentional).

27 Kleywegt (2005) 361.

28 *antennaeque laevo | prona dehiscentem cornu cum sustulit undam*. Cf. Zissos (2008) 344.

monstrous nature of the Theban ambush against Polynices' ambassador, Tydeus.²⁹ Valerius had similarly drawn attention to the motifs of violated hospitality and civil strife by drawing on the Ovidian Centauromachy in the tragic fight between the Argonauts and their hosts, the Doliones (Val. Fl. 3.14–272).³⁰ Statius' description of the night ambush partly gestures towards this unwitting transgression of friendship bonds in the *Argonautica*'s nocturnal battle (the only episode in which the Argonaut Tydeus is shown fighting)³¹ alongside his evocation of the nefarious conduct of the Centaurs portrayed in Valerius' Ovidian model. The result is to underline the horror of the scene in which a guest (an ambassador, no less) is attacked and civil strife first experienced.³²

Thus, just as the Argonauts anxiously wonder 'why helmets and shields glitter' (*cur galeae clipeique micent*, Val. Fl. 3.76) before a hurled spear (Val. Fl. 3.78–9) signals attack, so a concerned Tydeus sees the gleam of shields and helmets (*Theb.* 2.530–2)³³ before the enemy onslaught is launched with a spear-cast (*Theb.* 2.538–40). And Statius follows Valerius' trick of nodding to the Ovidian intertext by likening one of the characters (Tydeus/Cyzicus) to a Centaur involved in battle with a Lapith (Pholus/Rhoecus).³⁴ Furthermore, both Tydeus and Cyzicus are likened to a monstrous opponent of Jupiter (Briareus at *Theb.* 2.595–602; Coeus at Val. Fl. 3.224–8) and utter rebukes in the

29 See Parkes (2009b) 489.

30 See, for instance, the shared detail of burning hair at Ov. *Met.* 12.274–5 and Val. Fl. 3.137 and the number of names common to the two scenes: as well as Nestor, who participates in both fights (cf. Ov. *Met.* 12.383–4; Val. Fl. 3.143), note Eurytus (Ov. *Met.* 12.220; Val. Fl. 3.99), Corythus (Ov. *Met.* 12.290; Val. Fl. 3.99), Bienor (Ov. *Met.* 12.345; Val. Fl. 3.112) and Medon (Ov. *Met.* 12.303; Val. Fl. 3.118). For the civil war aspects of the Doliones episode, see the bibliography cited at Stover (2012a) 117 n. 18; Stover (2012a) 113–48 (an attempt to blame the Doliones).

31 See Val. Fl. 3.103–6. Tydeus is listed as an Argonaut only here (Zissos (2008) 262–3).

32 For other intertexts in Statius' passage, see Parkes (2010).

33 The detail of a gleaming helmet also figures at Virg. *Aen.* 9.373–5, in the nocturnal expedition of Nisus and Euryalus (*Aen.* 9.176–449), another intertext in the Statian passage (Parkes (2010) 18, 22 n. 28).

34 Both similes are introduced by *qualis in*. Cf. *qualis in adversos Lapithas erexit inanem | magnanimus cratera Pholus* ('as great-hearted Pholus lifted an empty mixing bowl against the Lapiths opposite', *Theb.* 2.563–4) with *qualis in Alciden et Thesea Rhoecus iniqui | nube meri geminam Pholoen maioraque cernens | astra ruit* ('even as Rhoecus, clouded by an excess of wine and seeing Pholoe double and the stars as larger, rushed to attack Hercules and Theseus', Val. Fl. 3.65–7). The Statian lines also rework Val. Fl. 1.336–8 (Zissos (2008) 236).

style of the Virgilian Numanus Remulus at *Aen.* 9.614–20.³⁵ Statius then continues to engage with the Cyzicus episode in his depiction of the ambush's aftermath at *Theb.* 3.1–217. The grief-stricken search for corpses and raising of pyres at *Theb.* 3.114–17 parallels the actions of the Doliones following the attack at Val. Fl. 3.274–361. Some of those mourning close the eyes of the dead ('these seal eyes', *hae lumina signant*, *Theb.* 3.129), in the manner of the grievers at Val. Fl. 3.279 ('some close eyes with their hands, too late', *pars sera componunt lumina dextra*), and the increase in lamentation of the mourners upon arrival recalls the especial grief aroused upon discovery of Cyzicus' corpse.³⁶ Furthermore, Aletes' comparison of grief felt by the Thebans to that roused by the appearance of Athamas carrying his half-dead son Learchus looks to the image in which Cyzicus is figured as Athamas bearing Learchus to the sorrow of the personified city of Thebes.³⁷

The *Achilleid* also simultaneously uses Valerius' *Argonautica* alongside its model's model, the *Metamorphoses*. So, for instance, the depiction of Chiron's home at *Ach.* 1.106–18 alludes to two Ovidian episodes, Peleus' rape of Thetis at *Met.* 11.221–65³⁸ in a Thessalian cave (*Met.* 11.229–37) and the Centauromachy at *Met.* 12.210–535.³⁹ However, it also seems to look to Valerius' description of the ship's ornamentation at 1.130–48 which itself alludes to these scenes.⁴⁰ For Statius' narratorial juxtaposition of references to Thetis' wedding (*Ach.* 1.109–10) and the Centaur–Lapith battle (*Ach.* 1.111–13) surely gestures to Valerius'

35 Cf. *Theb.* 2.661–8 with Val. Fl. 3.230–4. The Virgilian intertext of Statius is noted by Mulder (1954) 336. On Val. Fl. 3.230–4 and *Aen.* 9, see Stover (2012a) 131–3.

36 Cf. *ceu nulla prius lamenta nec atri | manassent imbres* ('as though there was no wailing before and no bitter tears had flowed', *Theb.* 3.122–3) with *tristi sileant ceu cetera planctu* ('as though all the rest kept silent from sad lament', Val. Fl. 3.281).

37 Cf. *neque funerea cum laude potitus | infelix Athamas trepido de monte veniret, | semianimem heu laeto referens clamore Learchum, | hic gemitus Thebis* ('nor was there such lamentation at Thebes when luckless Athamas gained deadly glory, coming down from the frightened mountain carrying with an exultant shout, alas, the half-dead Learchus', *Theb.* 3.185–7) with *qualisve redit venatibus actis | lustra pater Triviamque canens umeroque Learchum | advehit, at miserae declinant lumina Thebae* ('or as the father returns after he has finished hunting, singing of lairs and Diana and bearing Learchus on his shoulders but wretched Thebes lowered its gaze', Val. Fl. 3.67–9). Compare also the use of the filicidal Agave's fearful consciousness to illustrate the reactions of the Argonauts (Val. Fl. 3.264–6) and the Thebans (*Theb.* 3.188–90).

38 See e.g. Dilke (1954) 91–2; Heslin (2005) 263–4.

39 Cf. Mendelsohn (1990) 303; Newlands (2012) 65–6. References to ash trees (*Ach.* 1.113) and broken wine–bowls (1.114) nod to Ov. *Met.* 12.339–40 (Dictys impaled by a broken ash tree) and 12.235–7 (the *crater* hurled by Theseus).

40 For Valerius' engagement with Ovid, see Zissos (2008) 153–4.

narratorial juxtaposition of scenes from the marriage (Val. Fl. 1.130–9) and Centauromachy (Val. Fl. 1.140–8) in the ekphrasis. Support for Valerian intertextuality here is provided by Kozák's demonstration that the scene in which Chiron offers hospitality and tunes the lyre and Achilles sings (*Ach.* 1.184–94) looks back to Valerius' description of the Argo's decoration at 1.130–9 as well as Valerius' model, Catullus 64.⁴¹ If in this latter case we see Statius competitively changing Valerian artistic ekphrasis back into Catullan-style song,⁴² in the former case we find him turning it back to a landscape ekphrasis in the manner of *Met.* 11.229–37.

Such complex allusivity is again apparent at *Ach.* 1.43–98, which evokes a scene from Valerius Flaccus alongside that passage's model scene from Virgil's *Aeneid*. Critics have rightly drawn attention to the Virgilian intertext behind Thetis' lobbying of Neptune. She asks a god for a storm to shipwreck a Trojan prince, like the queen of the gods in *Aeneid* 1, but her efforts are wasted, just as the exertions of Juno in Books 1 (and 7) eventually come to nothing.⁴³ Attention to Statius' engagement with the *Aeneid* should not, however, occlude the Valerian intertext.⁴⁴ The scene also looks to Book 1 of the *Argonautica* where, in a nod to her vengeful and frustrated Virgilian persona, Juno regrets not sending a storm against Hercules (Val. Fl. 1.115–16).⁴⁵ The part of Hercules initially falls to Paris (*Ach.* 1.43–6). Just as Juno laments that she did not divert her enemy on his way to Iolcus, so Thetis rues her failure to shipwreck Paris' vessel on its outward journey. 'Now also' (*nunc quoque*, Val. Fl. 1.117), that is, in the present circumstances wherein the goddess seeks heroes to help Jason, Juno wishes Hercules was not a participant in her favoured expedition (Val. Fl. 1.117–19). Compare *Ach.* 1.47–51, where Thetis reasons that 'now also' (*nunc quoque*, 1.47) is the storm option open, although the stage might be too late. Following consideration of her inability to rouse a storm against Hercules, Juno then 'turns away her gaze to the Haemonian waters' (*Haemonias oculos detorquet ad undas*, Val. Fl. 1.120) and the narrative focus moves away from the goddess to the Argo, not returning until Book 3 when Juno separates Hercules from the Argonaut expedition by masterminding the nymph Dryope's abduction of Hylas (Val. Fl. 3.487–4.57). After pondering her failure to instigate an earlier

41 Kozák (2013) 261–2.

42 Kozák (2013) 261–2.

43 For the Virgilian Juno as model for Thetis, see e.g. Mulder (1955) 122–4; Aricò (1986) 2933–4; Delarue (2000) 75–8; Heslin (2005) 106–7.

44 See Kozák (2013) 250–1.

45 On the Virgilian intertextuality in this Valerian episode, see Zissos (2008) 145; for the Virgilian background to Valerius' Juno, see further Hershkowitz (1998b) 160–7.

storm against Paris and being foiled by Neptune in her actual attempt (*Ach.* 1.47–97), Thetis 'turns away her arms to the Haemonian land' (*ad Haemonias detorquet brachia terras*, 1.98) in her mission to move her son to a safer place.⁴⁶ She subsequently ensures Achilles is kept from the Trojan War by hiding him at Skyros, masterminding his removal through means of Deidamia with her nymph-like beauty.⁴⁷ So, after conjuring up the goddess in her moment of impotence in Book 1 of the *Argonautica*, Thetis goes on to evoke the more proactive Juno of Book 3. Furthermore, like Juno but at a greater personal cost, Thetis ultimately fails to engineer a permanent separation from the epic expedition.⁴⁸

Such parallelism casts Achilles in the parts of Hercules and Hylas, the two Argonauts separated from the expedition. Achilles' role of Hercules is appropriate in light of the many connections between the two heroes.⁴⁹ These are conjured by, for example, the entrance of Patroclus, Achilles' weaker emulator, in his wake (*Ach.* 1.174–7), which fleetingly evokes Hercules' own devoted sidekick, Hylas,⁵⁰ and by the clamouring of the Achaeans for the absent Achilles (*Ach.* 1.467–90) to the indignation of the slighted Protesilaus (1.496–513), a scene which reworks the Valerian Argonauts' reactions to the missing Hercules:⁵¹ for just as Meleager defensively alludes to the divine genealogies of other Argonauts, including himself (Val. Fl. 3.667–9), and asserts that salvation does not just rest on Hercules (3.673–5), so Protesilaus complains that he and the other heroes seem unworthy and that all adore Achilles (*Ach.* 1.499–504). Of course, the Argonauts stop looking for Hercules whereas the Achaeans go on to employ Calchas in their search for Achilles. The seer utters an inspired speech (*Ach.* 1.526–35), which responds to Mopsus' own prophecy at Val. Fl. 1.211–26.⁵² Mopsus is anxious about such threats to the completion of the

46 The parallel is noted by Kozák (2013) 256.

47 Cf. *Ach.* 1.293–6, where she is compared to Venus and Diana eclipsing their nymph companions.

48 See Heerink ((forthcoming b) ch. 4) for Hercules' return to the epic territory of Troy after his diversion from the epic Argonautic expedition.

49 See Parkes (2009b) 476–7. See also Fantuzzi (2012) 8–9, 77 n. 150.

50 For Hylas' lagging behind, see Val. Fl. 3.486; *Theb.* 5.441–3. For his desire to match Hercules and his inferior strength, see Val. Fl. 1.107–11; *Theb.* 5.442–4; Heerink (forthcoming b) ch. 4. Apollonius Rhodius and Valerius Flaccus had already mapped Hercules, lamenting the loss of Hylas, onto Achilles, grieving for the loss of Patroclus (e.g. DeForest (1994) 65; Hershkowitz (1998b) 154–6). Would Statius have reversed the process?

51 Cf. Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) 222.

52 Along with Sen. *Ag.* 720–74 and Luc. 1.678–95; see e.g. Méheust (1971) 92 n. 2; Aricò (1986) 2942.

poem's heroic task (and hence the epic narrative) as the loss of Hylas (Val. Fl. 1.218–20), a danger reiterated by Jupiter at Val. Fl. 4.7–8.⁵³ Calchas, the *vates* who keeps the epic plot on track,⁵⁴ has worries similar to that of his Valerian fellow poet-figure concerning the loss of Achilles. Moreover, there are linguistic similarities between the two prophecies. So, for instance, both seers deliver their visions 'at last' (*tandem*, Val. Fl. 1.209; *Ach.* 1.524), both use *quaenam* when questioning the identity of an unnamed woman (Val. Fl. 1.224; *Ach.* 1.535),⁵⁵ and both urge action upon a male (Jason/Achilles) using imperatives.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the parallelism between Hylas and Achilles continues in that both prophets see abducted youths, attired in outlandish 'garments' (*vestes*).⁵⁷ The threat to the Trojan expedition caused by Thetis' wiles is thereby underlined: Achilles comes close to remaining in the female (and non-epic) sphere while the ships go on without him. Such danger is, of course, averted by Odysseus who rescues Achilles from a fate akin to Hylas'.

The Abduction Motif

The mechanics involved in Statius' verbal evocation of the *Argonautica* and the self-consciousness with which he imbues his relationship with his Flavian rival are areas of burgeoning interest. One field in which further work could be done lies in Statius' engagement with the *Argonautica*'s themes and motifs.

53 See Feeney (1991) 316–17 (on Mopsus' epic vision) and 324 (on Jupiter's rebuke of Juno for her endangerment of the martial endeavour).

54 See Fantuzzi (2013) 161, 166.

55 Soubiran and Ripoll (2008) 226; cf. Fantuzzi (2013) 164. In the *Achilleid* the identification of this anonymous female (*improba virgo*, 1.534) is left deliberately unclear: is it Deidamia or Achilles? (See Moul (2012) 296; Fantuzzi (2013) 160.) Note, however, that the labelling of Dryope, the nymph who 'steals' (*rapit*, Val. Fl. 4.27) Hylas, as *improba* (4.26) may encourage the reader towards seeing the *virgo* as Deidamia.

56 Cf. Val. Fl. 1.225 *eripe*; *Ach.* 1.534 *scinde . . . ne cede*; Soubiran and Ripoll (2008) 226.

57 These are 'river-coloured' (*caeruleae*, Val. Fl. 1.220) or 'flowing' (*fluxae*, *Ach.* 1.533). The link between Hylas and Achilles is supported by other similarities in the depiction of the two youths. Hylas is the erotic target of the nymphs: through his loss, Juno claims, 'hope' (*spes*, Val. Fl. 3.542) will be taken away from the Achaean nymphs and Thessalian and Aetolian nymphs will complain (Val. Fl. 3.543–4). Compare the way in which Thetis' removal of Achilles leads the Thessalian nymphs to 'lament their long-hoped-for marriage' (*sperata diu plorant conubia*, 1.241). Hylas also has military promise. His valour demonstrated by his first engagement (Val. Fl. 3.183–5), he is described as 'a very great hope in warfare' (*spes maxima bellis*, Val. Fl. 3.183). Compare the way that the Achaeans pin their hopes on Achilles (*Ach.* 1.473–513).

Take, for example, abduction. This is a key concern of the Valerian epic, which provides various parallels for and prefigurations of Jason's seizure of the eastern maid Medea in 'stolen nuptials' (*raptis*... | *coniugiis*, 8.392–3), such as the Mysian nymph's amorous abduction of Hylas,⁵⁸ Jason's luring away of Acastus,⁵⁹ Jupiter's taking of the eastern boy Ganymede, pictured on the cloak at Val. Fl. 2.414–17,⁶⁰ the abduction of Io, and the rape of Europa (8.265–6).⁶¹ Jason's action is itself a prefiguration of Paris' departure with Helen: indeed, in a reworking of Herodotean causality, it is seen as an action for the Trojan conflict.⁶² The *Achilleid* shares the *Argonautica*'s interest in the theme of abduction. In the scene depicting the mustering of the Achaean forces (*Ach.* 1.397–559), Thetis' removal of her son is presented in these terms,⁶³ with the cross-dressed Achilles functioning as a sought-after stolen maiden such as Helen or Briseis,⁶⁴ and also, as we have seen, as one of antiquity's famous male abduction victims. Furthermore, the poem explicitly references Jupiter's rape of Europa (*Ach.* 1.72–5), Jason's abduction of Medea,⁶⁵ and the taking of Helen by her 'abductor' (*raptori*, 2.59) Paris.⁶⁶

Indeed, these abductions are linked. Thetis views Jason's seizure of Medea as a cause of the Trojan War alongside the judgement of Paris:⁶⁷ 'crimes of lands pass by with unmolested sails, since the Pagasaeon ship ruptured the laws and secluded majesty of the sea with Jason's rapine' (*eunt tutis terrarum crimina velis*, | *ex quo iura freti maiestatemque repostam* | *rupit Iasonia puppis Pagasaea rapina*, *Ach.* 1.63–5). Moreover, the *Achilleid*'s description of the Achaean mustering makes it seem as if the vengeance of the raped Europa lies behind the Trojan conflict: the depiction of a personified, 'avenging' (*ultrix*, 1.397) Europa stirring up the Greek army suggests this paramour of Jupiter's is

58 See e.g. *me* | *nympha rapit* ('a nymph stole me', Val. Fl. 4.26–7). Cf. DeForest (1994) 65 on the links between Apollonius' Hylas and Medea.

59 See Val. Fl. 1.695, *rpto*; cf. 1.160 (in the omen), *raptor*; 1.492 (simile), *rapuit*.

60 Cf. Harrison (2013) 220. The connection is also made by the evocation of Virgil's description of Ganymede (*Aen.* 5.254–7) in the depiction of the omen at Val. Fl. 1.156–60 (Zissos (2008) 170).

61 For Io and Europa, see Barnes (1981) 363–4; Davis (2009).

62 See e.g. Hershkowitz (1998b) 236. See also Davis and Fucecchi in this volume.

63 *Ach.* 1.526, *quo rapis*; 1.535, *raptus*. Cf. *abripitur* at *Ach.* 1.939 and 2.21, of Achilles' removal by the Greek search party.

64 Moul (2012) 286.

65 *Ach.* 1.65, *Iasonia*... *rapina*; 1.403, *rapina*.

66 See also *Ach.* 1.47, *raptae*; 1.946, *rapina*; 2.69, *facili*... *raptu*.

67 On the latter, see *Ach.* 1.67; 1.69–70. This action is given more prominence in the speech of Ulysses at *Ach.* 2.50–9.

angrily reacting to the repetition of her rape in Paris' actions.⁶⁸ Now Paris' abduction of Helen also has consequences: we are shown how it prompts Thetis' seizure of Achilles, an act which in turn leads to Achilles' rape of Deidamia (itself presented as a duplication of Paris' rapine).⁶⁹ Such interlinking can be seen as a response to Valerian precedent. Verbal echoes indicate that Statius' connecting of the abductions of Medea and Helen is indebted to the *Argonautica*. Jupiter's prediction of a shepherd, Paris, 'who will bring the Greeks lamentation and like rage and reciprocal gifts' (*qui gemitus irasque pares et mutua Graīs | dona ferat*, Val. Fl. 1.550–1), is picked up in Thetis' description of Paris as one 'destined to cause what groans, alas, to earth and heaven, and what to me!' (*quos gemitus terris caeloque daturus, | quos mihi, Ach.* 1.68–9).⁷⁰ Moreover, Statius further unfurls the consequences. Not only is the Valerian abduction of Medea an action for the unfolding Trojan conflict, but Valerius' chain of causation is developed. One of the consequences of Paris' rapine is the rape of a character, Deidamia (who is partly modelled on the Flavian Medea),⁷¹ by another character, Achilles, whose first appearance in the narrative looks to the Flavian Jason. For following his hunt, Achilles straightaway leaps into a river to wash the sweat steaming off him and then is compared to Castor entering Eurotas on his steed (*Ach.* 1.178–81), just as Jason straightaway rushes into a river after battle, with sweat steaming off his body, and then is likened to Mars entering the Hebrus on his horses.⁷²

68 See Moul (2012) 289–92.

69 Cf. Augoustakis (forthcoming). This rape is also presented as a rerun of the Ovidian Peleus' overcoming of Thetis (Heslin (2005) 266–7).

70 Parkes (2009a) 110.

71 Cf. *Ach.* 1.824–6 and Val. Fl. 5.343–7 with Parkes (2009a) 111 n. 3.

72 Cf. Val. Fl. 7.644–6 (so Perutelli (1997) 477), *protinus in fluvium fumantibus evolat armis | Aesonides, qualis Getico de pulvere Mavors | intrat equis uritque gravem sudoribus Hebrum* ('straightaway the son of Aeson rushes forward into the river with steaming shoulders, just as Mars enters the Hebrus with his horses from the dust of the Thracian battlefield and brands it deep with the sweat'), and *Ach.* 1.178–81, *protinus ille subit rapido quae proxima saltu | flumina fumantesque genas crinemque novatur | fontibus: Eurotae qualis vada Castor anhelat | intrat equo fessumque sui iubar excitat astri* ('straightaway in rapid leap he approaches the nearest river, and freshens in its waters his steaming cheeks and hair, just as Castor enters the shallows of the Eurotas on his panting horse, and revives the weakened shine of his star').

Conclusion

In short, we have seen that in spite of some chronological uncertainty over relative dates of composition, the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* may fruitfully be studied in terms of their engagement with Valerius Flaccus' epic. This engagement encompasses overlapping material, polemically showcased in a new frame, but also extends to non-Argonautic content. Typically verbal, it may also be found at the level of themes and motifs. Sustained use is made of scenes from the *Argonautica*, and, in line with Statius' typically complex allusive process, these are often conjured alongside imitation of the models for the Valerian passages, as demonstrated by, for example, the *Thebaid* ambush episode, which combines allusion to Valerius Flaccus' Cyzicus scene and the Ovidian Centauromachy which lies behind it. Far from being a passive imitator of his literary predecessor, Statius is a creative adapter and even a combative competitor who can self-consciously and self-assertively turn his epigonal status into a virtue.

Valerius Flaccus in Silius Italicus

Antony Augoustakis

The relationship between the three Flavian epicists, Silius Italicus, Statius and Valerius Flaccus,¹ remains a topic that has not received enough critical attention heretofore.² Given the uncertainty of exact dates for the composition of individual books of the *Argonautica*, the *Punica* and the *Thebaid*, critics have often assumed an unquestionable interaction between the three Flavian poets, an association whose exact details, however, cannot be pinned down with any confidence. For example, there are obvious thematic affinities between *Thebaid* 6 and *Punica* 16, both narrating funeral games. As Helen Lovatt points out concerning the interaction between the *Punica* and the *Thebaid*, the two poems display ‘the cut and thrust of mutual competition’.³

As Tim Stover has recently persuasively argued, Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica* is a product of the 70s, the early period of the Flavian regime, which came to power in Rome in the year 69 CE. Stover claims that Valerius was working on his poem during the decade 70–79 CE and probably shortly after the eruption of Vesuvius, but soon afterwards he died, leaving the poem unfinished.⁴ If we assume an early date for Valerius’ composition, and since Silius began his poem around 81 CE,⁵ the Roman *Argonautica* must have been of great influence on the other two Flavian epicists, as can be gleaned, for instance, from the display of *aemulatio* between Statius’ and Valerius’ narrative of the Lemnian massacre in *Argonautica* 2 and *Thebaid* 5 respectively.

1 For Silius Italicus, I use Delz’s (1987) Teubner Latin text; for Valerius, I use Ehlers’ (1980) Teubner Latin text. Translations of Silius Italicus are adapted from Duff (1934), and of Valerius Flaccus from Mozley (1934).

2 Dominik (2010) 446: ‘The intertextual relationship between Silius and the other Flavian epicists is deserving of much closer attention, namely the influence of Statius’ *Thebaid* and Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica* upon the *Punica*’; Lovatt (2010) 176: ‘A detailed study of the wider interplay between the two poems [i.e. the *Thebaid* and the *Punica*], and of both poets’ engagement with Valerius Flaccus, must be a major priority of research into Flavian epic in the future.’

3 Lovatt (2010) 175.

4 See Stover (2012a) 7–26, esp. 26.

5 On the problems of dating the *Punica* and various theories, see Augoustakis (2010b) 6–8.

Certainly Valerius' poem was also influential on Silius Italicus' epic enterprise, even though the choice of topics seems substantially different at first sight. The Argonautic saga is part of early, pre-Trojan, Greek myth, narrating the exploits of the heroes in their quest for the Golden Fleece and the spread of civilisation in the barbaric lands of the Euxine Sea. Conversely, Silius Italicus' historical epic treats the challenging heyday of the Roman Republic during the tumultuous years of the Second Punic War. Once criticised as the boring and dull longest surviving poem in Latin literature, the *Punica* has now received prominence in scholarly treatments and a positive re-evaluation among critics, though it is arguably the least read of the four Flavian epic poems. In recent years, scholarship on Silius has emphasised the poem's position within Flavian Rome as the new national epic whose goal was to replace the Aeneo-centric Virgilian prototype through a detour to Rome's first epicist, Ennius. As part of the poet's idealistic reconstruction of a glorious past, Silius recalibrates some of the darkest moments of Roman republican history with a view to the future in store for the Roman people under the empire, the Flavian emperors in particular; at the same time the Flavian poet points to the deterministic decline of the Roman state, after it reaches its zenith with the defeat of the African *other*, that is, Hannibal.⁶

Over a decade ago, in an article on the influence of Valerius Flaccus on Silius Italicus, François Ripoll demonstrated to some extent the various levels of interaction between the two poets, as Silius borrows from Valerius in constructing several key episodes in the *Punica*.⁷ In addition, commentators of Silius, often and *passim*, point to some verbal borrowings from Valerius, but it is clear that Silius draws on thematic materials from his predecessor as well.⁸ The aim of the present chapter is to examine several episodes in Silius Italicus that point to the exploitation of intertext and context from Valerius Flaccus' Roman *Argonautica*. Even though the orientation of the two poems is significantly different, in terms of the mythological and historical subject matter, there is an important point of contact: the Flavian ideological code promoted in both poems, with Vespasian and the *gens Flavia* occupying a prominent role as the new family ruling Rome (according to Jupiter's *Weltenplan*, Val. Fl. 1.555–60 ~ Sil. *Pun.* 3.594–629). Silius places his epic as a sequel to Homer and Virgil, whereas Valerius locates his poem as a prequel to Homer and therefore as the predecessor of all other Flavian epics. I offer a comparative study of several

6 See Augoustakis (2010a) and the essays in Augoustakis (2010c); Tipping (2010).

7 Ripoll (1999). For a list of verbal correspondences, see esp. 503–5; on more general, non-verbal, affinities, such as similes or battle scenes for example, see 506–10.

8 E.g. Spaltenstein (1986) and (1990); Littlewood (2011) and (forthcoming); Heerink (2013).

episodes in Silius and Valerius, such as the prophecy of Jupiter in *Punica* 3 and Proteus in *Punica* 7 with the prophecy in *Argonautica* 1, the suicide at Saguntum in *Punica* 2 with the death of Jason's parents and their katabasis to Elysium in *Argonautica* 1, the death of Pyrene in *Punica* 3 with the abduction of Hylas in *Argonautica* 3, and the monstrous serpent of Bagrađa in *Punica* 6 with the Sigeian monster in *Argonautica* 2.

Prophecies: Jupiter and Proteus

Silius Italicus' homage to the Flavian *gens* is incorporated, unsurprisingly, in Jupiter's prophecy regarding the future of humankind after the Punic Wars and the rise of Rome during the reign of the last of the Flavians, Domitian. This Aeneadic scene (Sil. *Pun.* 3.557–629) is modelled after several similar episodes we find in Silius' predecessors, from Virgil to Valerius Flaccus, as Ripoll has demonstrated, and, in particular, Valerius' prologue-dedication to Vespasian and his clan (Val. Fl. 1.5–21). The use of topoi in the respective eulogies by both poets is an expected gesture conforming with generic demands: Vespasian is after all the emperor who opens up the whole world to Roman rule (Val. Fl. 1.8–14 ~ Sil. *Pun.* 3.597–624), the continuator of the Julian *gens* (Val. Fl. 1.9 ~ Sil. *Pun.* 3.595), a man who will be deified together with his offspring and thereafter will reign supreme from Olympus in the company of Quirinus and the other ancestors of the Romans (Val. Fl. 1.15–20 ~ Sil. *Pun.* 3.625–9). To be sure, Silius shifts emphasis from Vespasian and Titus to Domitian himself, as his poem celebrates the reign of the latter, as opposed to the rule of the former, which had been highlighted in Valerius.⁹ But most interestingly, Silius opts to combine two episodes of Valerius into one, that is, a long prophecy, as opposed to a prophecy and a prefatory dedication.

In the second half of *Argonautica* 1, Jupiter responds to the complaints voiced by Sol concerning the future of his offspring Aeetes (Val. Fl. 1.498–573). Whereas Venus is reassured by her father in the *Punica* that the future awaiting the sons of Aeneas is a bright one (*pelle metus*, 'push your fears away', Sil. *Pun.* 3.571), in Valerius the future in store for Aeetes is rather bleak. Jupiter's world plan in Valerius is reassuring inasmuch as it guarantees the eventual decline of the Greeks, who are currently prospering during the Argonautic expedition, in a continuous succession of empires and world superpowers:¹⁰

9 See Ripoll (1999) 516–17 for detailed discussion.

10 On Jupiter's prophecy, see Zissos (2008) 305 and now Manuwald (2013) with further bibliography.

accelerat sed summa dies Asiamque labantem
linquimus et poscunt iam me sua tempora Grai

...

nec vellera tantum 546

indignanda manent propiorque ex virgine rapta
ille dolor, sed—nulla magis sententia menti
fixa meae—veniet Phrygia iam pastor ab Ida,
qui gemitus irasque pares et mutua Grai 550
dona ferat. quae classe dehinc effusa procorum
bella, quot ad Troiae flentes hiberna Mycenae,
quot proceres natosque deum, quae robora cernes
oppetere et magnis Asiam concedere fati!
hinc Danaum de fine sedet gentesque fovebo 555
mox alias.

But the final day comes quickly, and we abandon declining Asia, since now the Greeks ask from me their moment of glory... Nor does the Fleece alone wait to provoke indignation and the great grief accompanying the maiden's abduction. But—no other purpose is more fixed in my mind—a herdsman will come soon from Phrygian Ida who will bring groans to the Greeks and equal anger and reciprocal gifts. Then what wars shall you witness pour forth from the fleet of suitors, how many winters shall you see Mycenae cry encamped at Troy, how many princes and sons of gods, how many strong men shall you see die, and finally Asia yield to the mighty fate. Then I have decided the Danaans will decline, and soon afterwards I will favour other races.

(Val. Fl. 1.542–3, 546–56)

A traditional Διὸς βουλή concludes here with the Virgilian allusion to eventual Roman supremacy, without acknowledging it explicitly: the vague reference, *mox alias*, is underscored by its first position in the hexameter. This is a Darwinian contest resulting in the emergence of new world powers, after the collapse of the former key players: Asia and Greece yield eventually to world dominion by Rome. Valerius foreshadows the events that will take place in Homer's poem, as a pre-quel or a pre-text, to borrow Stephen Hinds' terminology,¹¹ or what Alessandro Barchiesi calls the 'future reflexive' (or 'allusion in the future tense'), i.e. the positioning of a story as a forerunner of its

11 Hinds (1998) 116.

traditional background:¹² the Roman *Argonautica* is established as a pre-text for the Homeric epic, since the Argo's voyage took place a generation or two before the Trojan War.

And yet as Valerius excises the judgement of Paris by making it into yet another, brief, episode in Jupiter's world plan (*veniet Phrygia iam pastor ab Ida*, 549),¹³ Silius decides to reintroduce the famous scene on Mt Ida as a *sine qua non* feature in his sequence of cosmic events. Such a gesture points to an elaboration of the Valerian theme by Silius and serves as a metapoetic gesture, as we shall see below. Not surprisingly, this is done in a scene of prophecy, during the Second Punic War: when the sea nymphs realise that the Carthaginian fleet is entering their waters at the port of Caieta, disturbed they visit Proteus, who in a prophecy unravels the future by looking back into the past, by means of the familiar epic technique of a flashback:

tunc sic evolvens repetita exordia retro	435
incipit ambiguus vates reseratque futura:	
‘Laomedonteus Phrygia cum sedit in Ida	
pastor et errantes dumosa per avia tauros	
arguta revocans ad roscida pascua canna	
audivit sacrae lentus certamina formae	440
...	
sed victae fera bella deae vexere per aequor,	
atque excisa suo pariter cum iudice Troia.	
tum pius Aeneas terris iactatus et undis	
Dardanios Itala posuit tellure penates.	475
dum cete ponto innabunt, dum sidera caelo	
lucubunt, dum sol Indo se litore tollet,	
hic regna et nullae regnis per saecula metae ...’	

Then the prophet, the god of many shapes, thus began to reveal the future, starting his tale far back in the distant past. ‘When the shepherd, descendant of Laomedon, sat on Phrygian Ida, and recalling with his sweet piping the bulls, who had strayed through pathless thickets, back to the dewy pastures, in a relaxed mood he heard as judge the contest of the goddesses for the prize of beauty ... But the defeated goddesses brought

12 Barchiesi (2001a) 105–27.

13 See extensively Ripoll (2000) on the judgement of Paris in all three Flavian epicists. On the *Achilleid* in particular, see Augoustakis (forthcoming). On the relationship between the episode in *Punica* 7 and Valerius, see Littlewood (2011) lix–lxii.

a fierce army across the sea, and Troy was uprooted together with the Trojan judge himself. Then pious Aeneas, after much suffering on land and sea, placed the gods of Troy on the soil of Italy. So long as the sea monsters keep on swimming and the stars shine in the sky and the sun rises on the Indian shore, the rule will be here [in Rome], and there shall be no end throughout the ages...'

(Sil. *Pun.* 7.435–40, 472–8)

What is at stake, as far as the Italian sea-nymphs are concerned, is world rule, a theme that permeates Silius' historical epic. Not only are we invited to visualise the transfer of power from the burning city of Troy through Aeneas to Italian soil, but at the same time we are also tempted to consider the temporality of the new *imperium*, until Proteus calms the nymphs down with reassurance of a rule *sine fine*, by means of an anaphora of the noun *regna* in 478. To be sure, as in Valerius, the reader is left to wonder where this seat of power is destined to move next. Unlike the Virgilian Jupiter, in Valerius' passage the supreme god cannot guarantee the everlasting, *sine fine*, duration of the Roman empire: in Val. Fl. 1.559, Jupiter talks of *longissima regna* ('longest rule'). To this Valerian outlook, Silius provides a significant addition, a sort of alteration to the account of his predecessor: the future of Rome is after all Virgilian or a variation thereof: *nullae regnis per saecula metae* (478). Silius corrects his predecessor in this metapoetic gesture: the scene of Proteus' prophecy elaborates on Valerius' Jupiter's brief reference to the judgement of Paris. Thus the *Punica* is placed as the continuation of Valerius' epic and as the last epic in a series of poems beginning with Homer, via Apollonius, Ennius, Virgil and Valerius. As the continuator of Valerius, by reflecting on the glorious days of the Roman state, Silius romanticises the past and idealises the contemporary ruling family as well: as Joy Littlewood observes, even 'in their darkest hour Silius judges that the Romans "pass the test" through their tenacious valour and endurance'.¹⁴ It is tempting to see here perhaps an example of the *aemulatio* between the two poets: Valerius' poem celebrates the *gens Flavia*, which is still in its early years of rule; by the time Silius composes the *Punica*, the new regime is consolidated, and the promise of a rule without end does not seem far-fetched at all; it is rather realised.

14 Littlewood (2011) lxi.

Saguntum and Iolcus

The first book of the *Argonautica* famously closes with the suicide of Jason's parents and their entrance to Elysium (1.730–851).¹⁵ Pelias' soldiers rush into the place of the suicide only to find Aeson and Alcimedede in their death pangs; immediately they kill their young son Promachus before his parents' eyes, as they are expiring:

fit fragor: inrumpunt sonitu, qui saeva ferebant	
imperia et strictos iussis regalibus enses.	
in media iam morte senes suffectaque leto	820
lumina et undanti revomentes veste cruorem	821
conspiciunt primoque rudem sub limine rerum	823
te, puer, et visa pallentem morte parentum	
diripiunt adduntque tuis. procul horruit Aeson	825
excedens memoremque tulit sub nubibus umbram.	

A noise arises: the soldiers burst in with a clamour, bearing the harsh command and their swords drawn according to the king's orders. They see the old pair already in the midst of dying, their eyes glazing in death, vomiting blood on their soaking clothes. And they see you, child, innocent still at the first threshold of deeds; they seize you pale, at the sight of your parents' death, and they add you to your family. As he was dying, Aeson nearby shuddered and bore his mindful shade under the clouds.

(Val. Fl. 1.818–26)

As has been observed, Aeson's death adds a closural effect to the end of the first book, just as Turnus' *umbra* does at the end of the *Aeneid*.¹⁶ This closure, however, is also matched in Silius' narrative, where in fact it is transferred to another episode, the siege at Saguntum, which has special affinities with *Argonautica* 2 and in particular the massacre of the Lemnian husbands by their wives.¹⁷

The first two books of Silius' poem are dedicated to the important, first major, event of the Second Punic War, the siege and destruction of Saguntum by the Carthaginians and Hannibal, who then embarks upon his expedition against Italy by crossing first the Pyrenees and then the Alps. The siege of the

15 On Valerius' sources, including Dionysius Scytobrachion, see Galli (2007) 18.

16 Hershkowitz (1998b) 12 n. 41 and Zissos (2008) 411.

17 On scenes of suicide in Flavian epic, see McGuire (1997) *passim*.

Iberian city occupies a prominent role within the framework of the epic, spatially but also thematically, especially since it is the first, indirect, defeat of the Romans, who are Saguntum's allies, and as such it functions as a prefiguration of further destructive battles to follow (at the Ticinus, the Trebia, Lake Trasimene, and Cannae; *Sil. Pun.* 4–10).¹⁸ Silius dramatises the battle and its aftermath by depicting how the Saguntines commit mass-suicide to avoid being captured and enslaved by the Carthaginians. As a result, when Hannibal enters the city, he finds a ghost-town:

semiambusta iacet nullo discrimine passim
 infelix obitus, permixto funere turba,
 ceu stimulante fame cum victor ovilia tandem
 faucibus invasit siccis leo, mandit hianti
 ore fremens imbellis pecus, patuloque redundat 685
 gutture ructatus large cruor; incubat atris
 semesae stragis cumululis aut murmure anhelis
 infrendens laceros inter spatiat acervos;
 late fusa iacent pecudes custosque Molossus
 pastorumque cohors stabulique gregisque magister, 690
 totaque vastatis disiecta mapalia tectis.
 inrumpunt vacuum Poeni tot cladibus arcem.

Unhappy in their death, the people's corpses lie around without distinction, half-burned and mixed up. Just like when a victorious lion, driven by hunger, has at last invaded the sheepfold with dried-up throat, he roars and with an open mouth he devours the helpless flock. Blood is vomited far and wide from his wide mouth; he sits on the dark heaps of the half-eaten slaughter, or, with a panting roar and gnashing his teeth, he walks about the heaps of mutilated bodies. Far and wide lie the sheep and their guard, the Molossian dog, and the group of shepherds and the master of the flock and fold: the huts are completely destroyed, with their roofs demolished. The Carthaginians enter a citadel empty after so many disasters.

(*Sil. Pun.* 2.681–92)

Just as Pelias' soldiers break into the place, so do the Carthaginians as they enter the city's stronghold (*inrumpunt*, Val. Fl. 1.818 ~ *Sil. Pun.* 2.692). In both

18 Bibliography on the Saguntum episode is vast; see Augoustakis (2010a) 113–36 and esp. n. 46 for further references and discussion.

poems, the frustration is emphasised: both groups have come in too late. Aeson and Alcimedede have committed suicide, as have the Saguntines too. Pelias' soldiers kill Promachus as the only means of revenge and punishment, just to spoil Aeson's blissful death, as he has chosen to exit life on his own terms. Silius completes the scene by having Hannibal enter a city already dead; there is no one left to kill. Furthermore, Silius opts to change the Valerian prototype even further: the slaughter of Promachus is transferred to an earlier scene during the Saguntine mass-suicide when, in acts reminiscent of civil war, husbands kill their wives, kinsmen kill members of their own family, mothers commit suicide before their children's bodies, to avoid the Carthaginians, under the influence of the Fury's goads and Juno's manipulations (*Sil. Pun.* 2.609–80). As Ripoll observes, Silius constructs this episode inspired, among others, by Valerius' narrative of the Lemnian massacre, where the women of Lemnos are driven to a similar state of madness reminiscent of civil war (*Val. Fl.* 2.196–241).¹⁹ And yet the two scenes discussed above show remarkable parallels as well, especially in the way they are continued in the narrative proper.

In Valerius, the book closes with 'a note of serenity and consolation, with a katabasis and the induction of Aeson and Alcimedede into Elysium'.²⁰ In Tartarus, there are twin gates, Valerius continues, one on the left for most, common people, and one on the right, reserved for rare occasions and for the select few:

lucet via late
 igne dei, donec silvas et amoena piorum
 deveniant camposque, ubi sol totumque per annum
 durat aprica dies thiasique chorique virorum
 carminaque et quorum populis iam nulla cupido. 845
 has pater in sedes aeternaque moenia natum
 inducitque nurum. tum porta quanta sinistra
 poena docet maneat Pelian, quot limine monstra.
 mirantur tantos strepitus turbamque ruentem
 et loca et infernos almae virtutis honores. 850

The road is brightened far and wide by the fire of the god, until they come to the forests and the pleasant homes of the pious ones and the fields where sunshine and clear days last for the whole year, as well as the bands and choruses of men and their songs: their inhabitants have no longer any wish to satisfy. The father [Cretheus] leads his son and his daughter-in-law to the eternal walls of this place. Then he teaches them what sort

19 Ripoll (1999) 512–13.

20 Zissos (2008) 412.

of punishment awaits Pelias at the left gate and how many monsters are on the threshold there. They marvel at the great noise and the onrushing crowd and the place and the infernal rewards of nourishing virtue.

(Val. Fl. 1.841–50)

Descriptions of Underworld geography are frequently employed in the epic tradition, as has often been observed.²¹ The katabasis of the old couple, however, illustrates Silius' re-employment of the topos in his description of a similar katabasis following suicide, that of the crowd of Saguntines who come to Elysium, with an apostrophe on the poet's part and a prophecy concerning the future of the Carthaginian general himself:

at vos, sidereae, quas nulla aequaverit aetas,
 ite, decus terrarum, animae, venerabile vulgus,
 Elysium et castas sedes decorate piorum.
 cui vero non aequa dedit victoria nomen
 (audite, o gentes, neu rumpite foedera pacis 700
 nec regnis postferte fidem!), vagus exul in orbe
 errabit toto patriis proiectus ab oris,
 tergaque vertentem trepidans Carthago videbit.
 saepe Saguntinis somnos exterritus umbris
 optabit cecidisse manu, ferroque negato 705
 invictus quondam Stygias bellator ad undas
 deformata feret liventi membra veneno.

But you, star-like souls, whom no age will ever match, go, glory of the world, admirable crowd, and adorn Elysium and the seats of the pious. But the man to whom unfair victory gave a glorious name (hear this, nations: do not break peace treaties and do not put power above loyalty), he will wander as an exile around the whole world, banished from the shores of his fatherland; terrified Carthage will see him retreating. Awakened from his sleep often by the Saguntine shades, he will wish he had committed suicide. But the sword will be denied to him, and the once unconquerable soldier will bear to the Stygian waves his limbs disfigured by black poison.

(Sil. *Pun.* 2.696–707)

21 See Spaltenstein (2002) 301 and Zissos (2008) 414 with further bibliography, as well as the reference to Sil. *Pun.* 13.531–61 for a similar employment of the gates in the Underworld (albeit multiplied to ten).

Hannibal's future is foreshadowed twice in the poem, at the end of the second book (2.701–7) and at the conclusion of Scipio's katabasis in Book 13 (13.868–93). The parallelism between the Thessalian katabasis in Valerius and the descent of the Saguntines in Silius confirms the latter poet's choice to fashion Hannibal as a tyrannical ruler, just like Pelias. Both will die and go to Tartarus: Pelias will enter from the left gate and will be tortured in the Underworld, and Hannibal will die of poison, an exile from Carthage. What is more, the phrase used for Hannibal's poisoning (*liventi membra veneno*, Sil. *Pun.* 2.707) echoes Valerius' similar description of the dragon guarding the Golden Fleece at the beginning of his poem:²²

tantoque silet possessa dracone
vellera, multifidas regis quem filia linguas
vibrantem ex adytis cantu dapibusque vocabat
et dabat externo liventia mella veneno.

And he keeps silent concerning the Fleece, guarded by an awful dragon, whom the daughter of the king was calling out of his lair by incantation and food, as he flickered his forked tongues; she was giving him bluish honey mixed with another's venom.

(Val. Fl. 1.60–3)

What is intriguing in this intertextual connection is the link forged between Hannibal and Pelias: the first mention of Medea in the poem as the caregiver of the dragon is conveyed through Pelias' secret hopes for Jason. This is what he does not reveal to the young man as he tries to send him off to the trip; these are the intimate thoughts of the tyrant, as he desires Jason's death by the dragon, Valerius says. Thus Hannibal's death casts him as a monster: Hannibal's dead limbs are likened to the blue colour of honey disfigured by poison, the magic food of the dragon guarding the Golden Fleece.

Silius therefore exploits the intertext from Valerius' first book and transposes it to the end of his second book, just as his predecessor had employed the end of the *Aeneid* and Turnus' katabasis to create the end of his first book of the *Argonautica*.

22 Noticed by Ripoll (1999) 513 without much elaboration on the significance: 'type d'hypallage transférant la pâleur de la victime sur le produit'.

Pyrene and Hylas

As Hannibal crosses the Pyrenees, the poet seizes the opportunity to digress with an aetiological story explaining the name of the famous mountain chain. Historical time is subsumed and absorbed by the mythological excursus,²³ as Silius employs the exemplum of Hercules to comment upon the exploits of Hannibal himself, thus turning the Carthaginian general into an ambiguous figure, one that concentrates many Roman traits as well, inasmuch as Hercules himself is cast as an ambivalent character, both as the civiliser and the violent transgressor of boundaries:²⁴

nomen Bebrycia duxere a virgine colles,	420
hospitis Alcidae crimen, qui, sorte laborum	
Geryonae peteret cum longa tricorporis arva,	
possessus Baccho saeva Bebrycis in aula	
lugendam formae sine virginitate reliquit	
Pyrenen, letique deus, si credere fas est,	425
causa fuit leti miserae deus.	

These mountains took their name from a virgin girl, daughter of King Bebryx, a victim of Hercules when he was a guest there. When he was seeking the far-away fields of three-bodied Geryon, as a part of his labours, in the savage court of Bebryx, overcome by wine, he abandoned Pyrene, robbed of her virginity, her beauty a cause for mourning. Thus, the god, if it is proper to believe this, became the cause of death for the poor maiden.

(Sil. *Pun.* 3.420–6)

As has been discussed previously, Pyrene's story is inserted at the crossroads of Hannibal's marching through the Pyrenees and the Alps, and as such it 'foreshadows the sufferings of the Carthaginian army. Despite the constant effort of the Carthaginian general to imitate Hercules, Hannibal is portrayed as a follower of an erroneous model, whose darkest traits Silius has carefully

23 On Pyrene, see Augoustakis (2003), esp. 254: 'The remodeling and reworking of different episodes found in the epic tradition enable Silius to underscore the importance of his aetiology, especially when it is inserted in a passage where the elision of historical time should not be dismissed as merely coincidental.'

24 See also Hulls (2013).

underscored.²⁵ Hercules' rape of Pyrene causes the girl's death, after she gives birth to a snake:

edidit alvo

namque ut serpentem patriasque exhorruit iras,
 confestim dulces liquit turbata penates.
 tum noctem Alcidae solis plangebatur in antris
 et promissa viri silvis narrabat opacis, 430
 donec maerentem ingratos raptoris amores
 tendentemque manus atque hospitis arma vocantem
 diripuere ferae.

For when she gave birth to a serpent from her womb, fearing the anger of her own father, disturbed she fled her sweet house at once. Then, in lonely caves she kept lamenting the night she spent with Alcides and narrating the promises of the man to the dark forests, until wild beasts tore her apart while mourning for the dishonest love of her ravisher and stretching forth her hands and imploring the aid of her guest.

(Sil. *Pun.* 3.426–33)

Silius showcases the characteristic repetition of the calling of a beloved's name as a symbol of a narrative that is bound to resonate (meta)poetically for the many generations to come as the story itself is repeated and transformed. The reiteration underscored in the verses above is reflected through the repetition of the name of Pyrene in the narrative that follows:

laceros Tirynthius artus,

dum remeat victor, lacrimis perfudit et amens
 palluit invento dilectae virginis ore 435
 ...
 maestro clamore ciebat 437
 Pyrenen, scopulique omnes ac lustra ferarum
 Pyrenen resonant.

When the Tirynthian hero returned as conqueror, he shed many tears over the lacerated limbs of Pyrene, and in despair he turned pale when he found the head of the maid he had loved... He kept calling Pyrene's

25 Augoustakis (2003) 253–4.

name with mourning lament, and all the cliffs and the lairs of the wild beasts were echoing Pyrene's name also.

(Sil. *Pun.* 3.433–5, 437–9)

The rape of the maiden is followed by Hercules' burial of the limbs and the naming of the mountains after the unfortunate Pyrene. As Ripoll correctly observes, Valerius serves as a model for this Silian episode, and in particular the abduction of Hylas by the nymph Dryope in *Argonautica* 3:²⁶

560

nil umbra comaeque
turbavitque sonus surgentis ad oscula nymphae.
illa avidas iniecta manus heu sera cientem
auxilia et magni referentem nomen amici
detrahit, adiutae prono nam pondere vires.

The shadow, the hair and the sound of the nymph rising to kiss him did not agitate him. The nymph draws him down, throwing her arms eagerly around him, as he was calling for help, to no avail, too late, and he was repeating the name of his great friend. For her strength was aided by his falling weight.

(Val. Fl. 3.560–4)

As Hylas calls upon Hercules for help, Dryope draws him down. Pyrene dies calling upon Hercules for help and is then buried, as her name is echoed by nature and the crying ravisher himself. Hylas' abduction results in immense grief for the demigod, who then abandons the expedition altogether as a result:

585

pavet omnis conscia late
silva, pavent montes, luctu succensus acerbo
quid struat Alcides tantaque quid apparet ira
...
volat ordine nullo
cuncta petens, nunc ad ripas deiectaque saxis
flumina, nunc notas nemorum procurrit ad umbras. 595
rursus Hylan et rursus Hylan per longa reclamat
avia: responsant silvae et vaga certat imago.

²⁶ Ripoll (1999) 510–11. Cf. also 518 (with Spaltenstein (1986) 232) on the possible connection between King Bebryx in the Pyrenees and the barbaric boxer from Bebrycia in *Argonautica* 4.

In guilt, the whole forest is frightened, far and wide, the mountains are too, as to what Hercules could do inflamed by severe grief, as to what he could bring about in his great wrath... He rushes on seeking everything in no particular order: he hastens now down to the banks of the river and the precipitous waterfalls, now to the shades of the woods he knows well. He calls the name of Hylas again and again through the pathless distances; the woods reply, and the wandering echo emulates his voice.

(Val. Fl. 3.584–6, 593–7)

Despite the generic rendering of the episode of Hylas and its fashioning after similar scenes of loss and grief elsewhere,²⁷ the proximity of the Pyrene episode to Hylas' abduction in Valerius reveals a further point of contact between the two authors: Silius' Hannibal crosses the Pyrenees in emulation of Hercules, hoping to cross the Alps soon afterwards, again imitating the demigod and following in his footsteps. Rape, blood, loss, grief and misfortune add dark overtones to the attempted crossing, which is marked in the narrative as a transgression against nature and is accompanied by the literal laceration of Hannibal's army. Hannibal soon loses many of his men at the Alps, in a scene that has been described as reminiscent of Pyrene's rape.²⁸ In Valerius, Hercules suffers great loss, even though he is not the perpetrator of the crime: he is the man affected by Dryope's actions and Juno's machinations. But his model of heroism is one that cannot continue in the poem: grief, the result of his love for Hylas, overtakes him, as the book ends (*urit amor*, 'love burns him', Val. Fl. 3.736). At the beginning of the fourth book, and as Hercules is still murmuring Hylas' name (*et Hylan resonantia | semper ora ferens*, 4.18–19), the apparition of the boy achieves little comfort for the demigod (4.25–37). As he looks for his comrades, he realises that he has been abandoned; Hercules feels silent shame (*tacitumque pudet*, 4.57).²⁹ Hercules functions as the link in the two stories to confirm that the model of leadership presented by the demigod is inadequate. Hannibal is following an erroneous model: Hercules, the ravisher of Pyrene, or Hercules, the lover of Hylas, who by necessity is abandoned alone on the shore by his comrades.

27 Perhaps Orpheus and Eurydice from Virgil's fourth *Georgic*: cf. Spaltenstein (2004a) 172; Heerink (forthcoming b).

28 See Augoustakis (2003) 248–52.

29 For possible explanations of the shame, see Korn (1989) 57–8 and Murgatroyd (2009) 54. For Hercules as the paradigm of the civiliser and protector of humankind, see Hershkowitz (1998b), esp. 146–58.

Bagrada and Troy

The figure of Hercules, however, serves as a link to another Silian character, namely Regulus, who occupies a prominent, ambiguously heroic, role in the flashback of *Punica* 6.³⁰ The narrative of the First Punic War, as presented in the sixth book, elucidates many of the aspects of the Second War and acquires a foreshadowing function as the Romans come out of a terrible defeat at Lake Trasimene in the previous book. The connecting figures are Serranus, Regulus' son, and Marus, Regulus' companion in Africa. Regulus' exploits in Africa and the killing of the deadly serpent at the Bagrada have been variously interpreted by scholars: Regulus has been mostly cast as the Stoic sacred figure, the man who returns to Carthage to die, loyal to his countrymen and *fides*.³¹ In a previous study, I have examined the traits in Regulus' character that disclose a rather ambiguous side of the hero, one that raises questions over the activities in Africa and his exemplary behaviour as the soldier of excessive *ira* and *animus*, who is interrogated and undermined by his wife, Marcia.³² Here I would like to pursue the link between Hercules and Regulus based on the episode of the serpent itself and the connections with the scene of Hesione's liberation from the Sigeon monster in *Argonautica* 2.³³

In the second book of Valerius' *Argonautica*, Hercules liberates the Trojan princess Hesione from the terrible predicament of her exposure on a crag at the shore of Sigeum, at the mercy of Poseidon's sea monster (2.451–578). Hercules undertakes a huge task, since the enterprise is certainly not easy:

tum vero fremitus vanique insania coepti
et tacitus pudor et rursus pallescere virgo.
proicit arma manu, scopulos vicinaque saxa
respicit...

30 See Augoustakis (2006) 145 and n. 10 for bibliography on the connection.

31 See Augoustakis (2006) 145 and n. 7 for bibliography. Vinchesi (2008) concentrates on the relationship between the two snakes in Silius and Statius' *Thebaid* 5. See also Soerink (2013) on the relationship between the Flavian epicists regarding the representation of snakes.

32 See Augoustakis (2006) and (2010a) 156–95.

33 The connection between the two episodes was recognized long ago by Bassett, with some reservations. See Bassett (1955) 7–8 with n. 50, 51, 54, 67: 'imitation ... probably of Valerius Flaccus'. But also p. 9: 'certain correspondences with the episode of the Sigeon sea monster in Valerius, Flaccus seem more than fortuitous'. On the Hesione episode in Valerius, see Hershkowitz (1998b) 72–8.

But then he groaned: the madness of the vain undertaking! the silent shame and the paleness returning to the maiden's face! He casts the weapons from his hand and looks back at the crag and neighbouring rocks...

(Val. Fl. 2.525–8)

As we saw above, after Hercules is forsaken by his comrades, he *tacitum pudet* (4.57). But the thought of failure is quickly cast aside as he fearlessly confronts and kills the serpent. While the phrase *tacitus pudor* has not attracted the attention of the commentators,³⁴ I believe it serves as an intratextual link between the two passages. Hercules' *aristeia* in the second book proves successful, but in the following book he suffers the loss of his companion Hylas and consequently his companions the Argonauts.

Just before the killing of the serpent in Africa, Regulus is ignited similarly because of the loss of many of his companions, who become the monster's prey (Sil. *Pun.* 6.197–206):

ingemuit casus iuvenum miseratus acerbos,
utque erat in pugnas et Martem et proelia et hostem
igneus et magna audendi flagrabat amore...

He groaned in pity for the terrible demise of the youths, and as he was hot for battle and fighting and war and the enemy, and as he was burning with the love of daring great things...

(Sil. *Pun.* 6.207–9)

Regulus' 'siege' of the serpent is successful but soon afterwards, when he engages in combat with the Spartan Xanthippus, he displays similar eagerness, which then proves destructive:

non socios comitumve manus, non arma sequentum
respicere; insano pugnae tendebat amore
iam solus...

He did not look back to his companions or the band of his helpers or followers or their weapons; he was pressing on alone in his wild desire for battle...

(Sil. *Pun.* 6.334–6)

34 Poortvliet (1991a) 276 compares it to 4.201 and 5.567 but not 4.57.

Hercules' *insania*³⁵ has a successful outcome, whereas Regulus' *insanus amor* endangers his soldiers and destabilises the war on African soil. In fact, Regulus and the rest of his army are captured as prisoners of war.

The killing of the sea monster by Hercules occupies only a few lines in the narrative (Val. Fl. 2.530–6). Nature reacts to the demise of the sacred beast:

Idaeaque mater
et chorus et summis ulularunt collibus amnes.

The mother of Mt Ida and her chorus and the rivers from the hill-tops bewailed.

(Val. Fl. 2.536–7)

Silius opts for a lengthier description that includes the reaction of the surrounding landscape, namely how the nymphs react to the death of the sacred monster:

erupit tristi fluvio mugitus et imis
murmura fusa vadis, subitoque et lucus et antrum
et resonae silvis ulularunt flebile ripae. 285
heu quantis luimus mox tristia proelia damnis,
quantaque supplicia et quales exhausimus iras!
nec tacuere pii vates famulumque sororum
Naiadum, tepida quas Bagra da nutrit in unda,
nos violasse manu seris monuere periclis. 290

From the grim river burst a roaring, and from the inner depths growling is poured forth, while suddenly both the grove and the cave and the banks of the river wailed re-echoing to the woods. Alas, with what great losses did we soon pay for the grim battle, and how much punishment and wrath did we drink up! Nor did the pious seers remain silent: they warned us of later dangers, because we had violated with our hand the servant of the Naiad sisters, whom the Bagra da nurtures with its warm stream.

(Sil. *Pun.* 6.283–90)

Silius connects the violation of the serpent at the Bagra da with the subsequent punishment of the Romans in the battle with the Greek forces of Xanthippus

35 Interpreted by Spaltenstein (2002) 455 as 'colère furieuse ... *Insania* s'emploie pour toutes sortes de sentiments violents ...'.

and Regulus' imprisonment. Certain resonances, as noted by Bassett, such as *flebile* (cf. Val. Fl. 2.453), *murmura* (cf. *remurmurat*, Val. Fl. 2.498) and *ulularunt* (Val. Fl. 2.537), establish a firm link between the two poems. But beyond the presence of verbal allusions, the function of each episode strongly links the two figures, Hercules and Regulus: Hercules is cast as the liberator of Hesione, while Regulus' failure in Africa results directly in the violation of nature. Furthermore, the liberation of Hesione is followed by the false promises on the part of her father Laomedon, who does not keep his word, thus bringing about the eventual downfall of Troy as foreshadowed in the narrative (Val. Fl. 2.578). Regulus' downfall results in many years of war between the Romans and the Carthaginians, and his model of heroism is questioned by Silius, who underscores the lack of a leader among the Romans who could face Hannibal effectively, until the emergence of Scipio Africanus.

Conclusion

The relationship between the two Flavian poets, Valerius and Silius, is a topic that demands further and systematic exploration. By moving away from the strict similarities of language and correspondence of verbal allusions, which are beyond doubt present in each poet, we should turn our attention to the use of Valerian passages and their incorporation within the framework of Silius' poem on the Second Punic War as an integral part of the historical epic. Silius exploits the context and intertext of Valerius' mythological poem to establish his own *opus* as the continuation in a line of epics that narrate the exploits and glories of men from the distant mythological past to the most recent historical present, all in line with the aim to praise and celebrate the expansion of the Empire under the Flavian *gens*.

PART 5
Reception



Interpres operis alieni? Giovan Battista Pio's Continuation of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Andrew Zissos

Introduction

The *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus breaks off abruptly some way into Book 8, with the Argonauts blockaded in the delta of the Ister River by a Colchian fleet under the command of Medea's brother Absyrtus. Massively outnumbered, the Argonauts see no viable alternative to offering to surrender Medea in exchange for free passage, and they have prevailed upon Jason to do so. Medea, having learned of these discussions, excoriates her lover for entertaining his comrades' suggestion. In the last extant verse, Jason begins to answer Medea's bitter reproaches, posing a pair of rhetorical questions: *mene aliquid metuisse putas? me talia velle?* ('Do you think I feared anything? That I wish it so?', Val. Fl. 8.467).¹

It is a tantalising moment for the narrative to leave off.² Modern scholars, of course, derive a certain perverse pleasure from incomplete texts; but for Renaissance readers who, in the decades following the appearance of the *editio princeps* (Bologna, 1474), could read Valerius Flaccus in an ever-widening assortment of editions, the narrative void must have screamed out for a remedy. Such was duly attempted by a talented and enterprising editor, the Bolognese humanist scholar and poet Giovan Battista Pio (in Latin Johannes

* The titular citation *interpres operis alieni* ('translator of another man's work', *Inst.* 10.1.90) is Quintilian's characterisation of Varro of Atax, in reference to the latter's 'translation', now unfortunately lost, of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius. An early version of this essay was presented at the conference 'Always Coming After: the Influence and Impact of Post Augustan Epic', University of Nottingham, UK, 12–14 July 2010. A more developed version was informally presented and discussed at the University of Amsterdam on 21 March 2013, at the final meeting of a graduate course on Valerius Flaccus taught by Mark Heerink. I am grateful to audience and interlocutors on both occasions for their thoughtful reactions and helpful comments.

1 All translations of Valerius Flaccus' and Pio's Latin texts are my own.

2 Cf. e.g. Zanker (1979) 65–7 identifying this moment in the Hellenistic *Argonautica* as the point at which Apollonius' Jason begins to turn into his Euripidean counterpart.

Baptista Pius Bononiensis). Pio wrote, in Latin hexameters, a conclusion to Valerius' incomplete epic, which he appended to his own edition of the *Argonautica*.³ This edition appeared in 1519, in the middle of the most prolific phase of Pio's academic career, which saw him produce editions and commentaries on a wide range of classical Latin texts.⁴

As I have noted elsewhere, whatever its artistic merit, Pio's Argonautic continuation importantly places Valerius Flaccus among the ancient Latin poets who, beginning in the Renaissance, were made subjects of *supplementa auctorum*.⁵ The supplement itself also enjoyed a certain prominence for about three centuries, as various subsequent editors of the *Argonautica* chose to include Pio's supplement in their own editions. By the mid nineteenth century, however, it had lapsed into obscurity, as editors and translators alike opted to exclude it.⁶ It remained virtually unknown to readers and little discussed by scholars until the very end of the twentieth century, when Jörg Rieker brought it back into critical focus with a short but thoughtful contribution to the second collective volume in the series *Ratis Omnia Vincet*.⁷ Six years later, Beate Kobusch's monumental edition of Pio's continuation, with facing German translation and commentary, appeared. Kobusch's volume, which exceeds 700 pages, offers a solid foundation for further scholarly activity on the supplement; this essay represents one attempt to build upon her diligent work.

Since most readers will have never encountered Pio's continuation, it will be helpful to begin with basic details of size and arrangement. The supplement runs to just over 1,400 verses and is distributed over three separate books. After extending Valerius' incomplete eighth book from 467 to 580 lines, Pio adds a ninth and a tenth of, respectively, 520 and 790 lines.⁸ This makes an average

3 On the Latin of Pio's supplement, an intriguing blend of colloquial vocabulary (e.g. *mulier*, *remex*, *actutum*—the last probably attesting to the influence of comedy) and expressions culled from Roman epic (especially Virgil, Ovid, Lucan and Valerius himself), see Rieker (1998) 360–3. Kobusch (2004) provides an extensive list of phrases and word combinations taken from earlier Roman poets (Valerius included) in the apparatus accompanying her text.

4 For Pio's life and work, Rieker (1998) 358–9 offers a brisk overview (with further references); full details may be found in Kobusch (2004) 19–117.

5 Zissos (2006b) 174.

6 The exclusion of the supplement from translations of the *Argonautica* was universal, though individual translators clearly entertained the possibility of its inclusion: see e.g. Caussin de Perceval (1829) vi.

7 Rieker (1998).

8 This is a *de facto* weighing-in on the much-debated question of the total number of books Valerius intended. Kobusch (2004) 182–3 deems it unlikely that Pio gave much thought as he was merely following Apollonius Rhodius' storyline. But both the necessity of settling on

length of 630 verses per book, which is slightly less than, but scarcely out of line with, Valerius' practice in his first seven books. In the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, by contrast, the length of each of the four books is far greater, with the last running to nearly 1800 verses.

Pio's continuation is announced on the title page to his edition with the simple (and arithmetically imprecise) pronouncement *ADDITIS LIBRIS TRIBUS QUI DESIDERABANTUR*. This vague declaration is particularised by the three internal headings marking Pio's incipit at 8.468 and the beginning of Books 9 and 10, all of which specify *EX APOLLONIO RHODIO*, with the latter pair adding *INTERPRETE PIO*. The implication, then, is that Pio is filling out the missing conclusion of Valerius' epic by adding a translation of the corresponding part of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius.⁹

If this were strictly the case, if Pio had simply translated en bloc from the Hellenistic epic, there would be little point analysing his supplement from anything other than a linguistic point of view. Fortunately it is not: there are numerous passages in which Pio has gone well beyond translating Apollonius, providing new content that often constitutes an attempt to conform thematically to—and thus to 'continue' in a meaningful sense—Valerius' narrative. Such attempts at genuine continuation are, however, erratic and uneven rather than consistent and regular, attesting to an underlying equivocation in Pio's conception of his literary project. Because of this equivocation the critic, in considering any given textual sequence, must first identify which 'Pio' is predominant—the Apollonian translator or the Valerian continuator. The question is all the more critical because in a great many passages it is simply impossible for him to be both. A cursory examination of the respective narratives of the Hellenistic and Flavian epics reveals significant differences between the two storylines. There is little doubt that Valerius drew directly upon Apollonius' account, which supplies the basic narrative sequence with

non-Apollonian book divisions and *ADDITIS LIBRIS TRIBUS QUI DESIDERABANTUR* in the volume title suggest otherwise. In any event, Pio's supplement exerted an influence on the critical debate; the ten-book theory has long since fallen from favour, but still finds occasional champions, many of whom adduce Pio's supplement, as most recently Soubiran (2002) 32–4. In recent decades many critics, perhaps the majority, have inclined to the view that Valerius intended eight books, which would mean that only a few hundred lines remained to be written. See further below, n. 24.

- 9 There is perhaps a hint of dissonance between *INTERPRETE PIO* and the initial declaration of Book 8, *PIO BONONIENSI AUCTORE*. Kobusch (2004) 145–6 points out that Pio also uses the term *interpres* of his role as commentator: the term was widely used in the Renaissance of both translators (its original and primary ancient sense) and annotators *qua* explicators. In the book headings, though, the former sense is clearly paramount.

respect to both selection and sequence of episodes. The Flavian poet has nonetheless made significant departures, such as the suicide under duress of Jason's parents, which grimly concludes Book 1, and the Colchian civil war, narrated at length in Book 6. And even when adhering more closely to an Apollonian framework, Valerius gives each episode an original turn—often through inter-textual engagements with Virgil's *Aeneid*—resulting in a profound transformation on both the thematic and the poetical levels. As a consequence, the Hellenistic epic is often Valerius' foil as much as his model.¹⁰

The roles of continuator and translator are thus frequently irreconcilable, and Pio's success in handling this discordancy is central to an assessment of his artistic achievement. Kobusch is particularly good at pointing out the pervasive tussle between the two literary impulses.¹¹ In this her annotations build usefully upon the more rudimentary commentary that accompanied the supplement in the original edition. Though Pio himself produced the commentary to his text of Valerius Flaccus, when it came to the supplement he handed the commentator's quill to his son, Giulio Cesare Pio.¹² Giulio Cesare's commentary routinely documents instances of Apollonian translation. The most frequent manner of entry has the form: lemma + *Apollonii verba sunt haec/ Apollonius ait* + citation. The point of such entries is often to indicate linguistic congruence, that is, to demonstrate Pio's rendering into Latin hexameters not just Apollonius' plot details, but even his very formulations.¹³ Conversely, Giulio Cesare sometimes points out where Pio has *not* simply translated the Hellenistic poem. At 8.526, for instance, he observes: *Hic Pius paulum discedit a Rhodio, forte non infelicitur*. That slight deviations are deemed noteworthy underscores the assumption that Pio's most frequent procedure is simply to translate.

In light of the foregoing it is unsurprising that, in habitually grafting Apollonius' narrative matter onto Valerius' storyline, Pio often lands himself in trouble. Nevertheless, his obliviousness to the contradictions resulting from

10 Fully discussed at Zissos (2008) xxv–xxvi.

11 Kobusch (2004) 184.

12 Various critics, starting with Burmann in his 1724 edition (which included the supplement), have voiced the suspicion that this arrangement was a mere front, and that the commentator was Pio himself—or at the very least that Pio closely collaborated with his son in writing the commentary to the supplement. The annotation at 9.468–9 (*... ut apud Plautum in Asinaria docui*, referring to Pio's Plautus commentary) offers powerful support for this theory: see further Kobusch (2004) 186–7.

13 As Soubiran (2002) 33 wryly puts it, 'Pio a suivi très fidèlement (plus que ne l'avait fait Valerius Flaccus dans ce que nous avons de lui) les *Argonautiques* de Apollonios de Rhodes...'.

this practice is occasionally breathtaking. One does not have to look hard for passages in which mechanical reproduction of Apollonian content leads to nonsense. Perhaps the most glaring case involves the death of the Argonaut Canthus while rustling cattle in Libya on the homeward journey, as recounted by Pio at *Suppl.* 10.503–6, closely following Apollonius' account (Ap. Rhod. 4.1485–9). This runs afoul of Valerius' storyline, which has Canthus slain in combat in Colchis prior to the Argonauts' return voyage. Indeed Canthus' death and the subsequent struggle for his body (6.317–72) constitute a central episode in Valerius' Colchian civil war narrative, anticipated in the catalogue at 1.450–6, with a final reminiscence at 7.422. Canthus is thus emphatically dead well before Valerius' narrative breaks off, and Pio's account of his death in Libya is inexcusably inept in a purported continuation of that narrative. Similarly careless, if generally less egregious, effects are found throughout the supplement. So, for example, Pio follows Apollonius in identifying Ancaeus as the Argo's helmsman on the return voyage (*Suppl.* 10.282–3; cf. Ap. Rhod. 4.1261). But Valerius had deviated from his Hellenistic predecessor in making Erginus succeed Tiphys as helmsman after the latter's death (5.63–7), and he unmistakably identifies Erginus as helmsman on the return voyage (8.177, 197). Likewise, Juno's expression of gratitude to Thetis for rejecting Jupiter's sexual advances replicates her sentiments in the Hellenistic *Argonautica* (*Suppl.* 9.323–7; cf. Ap. Rhod. 4.790–8), but is incompatible with Valerius' earlier affirmation of a rival version in which Jupiter rejected Thetis, much to the latter's chagrin (*nec Iove maiorem nasci suspirat* [sc. *Thetis*] *Achillen*, 'she sighs that Achilles will not be born greater than Jupiter', Val. Fl. 1.133).¹⁴

Difficulties of a somewhat more subtle kind arise from Valerius' repositioning of elements from the Hellenistic epic. So for example Valerius' treatment of the myth of Phaethon's death and the arboreal weeping of his transmogrified sisters, the Heliades, in the ekphrasis at 5.429–34 amounts to a transposition from its topographically motivated location, during the narrative of the return voyage, in the Hellenistic epic (Ap. Rhod. 4.627–39). Even in the unlikely event that Valerius meant to send the Argonauts home by the same route as in Apollonius, and had in mind to recount that journey in detail, it would be almost unimaginable for him to air the same details of this tangential myth a second time in his narrative of the return voyage. But Pio, insensitive to such

14 For Valerius' treatment, see Zissos (2008) 157. Regarding the consequent wedding of Peleus and Thetis, Pio's Juno reports its celebration in the groom's palace with all the gods in attendance (*Suppl.* 9.340–1, *ante tuos thalamos cunctis de more vocatis | caelicolis*, following Ap. Rhod. 4.807–8, *θεοὺς . . . πάντας*), whereas Valerius had the wedding held in a cave with only sea divinities in attendance (Val. Fl. 1.137–9).

principles of poetic economy, does precisely this (*Suppl.* 9.123–46). Similar considerations should have made an attentive Valerius-continuator wary of replicating Apollonius' elaborate ekphrastic treatment of the cloak of Hypsipyle, a guest gift given to Jason by the Lemnian queen, and now treacherously offered to Absyrtus to coax him to his doom (Ap. Rhod. 4.421–34). For Valerius has already described at length a cloak that Hypsipyle had given Jason, which he thereafter gave to honour the corpse of King Cyzicus, inadvertently slain by him (2.408–17). This transposition seems aimed at circumventing a troubling Apollonian passage (on which more below), without failing to take up the formal challenge of the ekphrastic tour de force it contained. Once again, though, Pio fails to take into account Valerius' repositioning of inherited Apollonian elements, so that, in mechanically reproducing this content, he serves up another elaborated description of a *second* (from the point of view of Valerius' narrative) cloak given by Hypsipyle to Jason.¹⁵

Such faults—whether conspicuous or more subtle, whether confounding narrative logic or violating principles of poetic economy—might well prompt the reader to dismiss Pio's continuation out of hand. This would be regrettable, though, for there is much of value in it. If at his worst Pio is a rather thoughtless and mechanical translator of the Hellenistic *Argonautica*, at his best he is an adept poetic improviser with a particular flair for metapoetic effects. Intermittent alertness to his role as Valerius-continuator often manifests itself in ingenious incidental touches. Exemplary in this regard is the attribution of 'Valerian' memories to Medea in the course of replaying an Apollonian scene. In the Hellenistic epic, the Colchian princess faces her last personal peril on Drepane, when King Alcinous resolves to rule on whether she is to remain with the Argonauts or be returned to her father in Colchis. On the eve of this ruling, Medea pleads with the Argonauts not to forsake her, recalling her assistance in gaining the Golden Fleece (Ap. Rhod. 4.1049–51). In reworking this scene, Pio has Medea recall instead the Argonauts' valiant action in the Colchian civil war:

15 It must be acknowledged, though, that Pio demonstrates a characteristic metaliterary sophistication here, introducing the ekphrasis with *nec non praemittere dona | hospitia . . . in primis peplum Hypsipyles* ('nor did she fail to send guest gifts in advance, chief among them a cloak of Hypsipyle'; *Suppl.* 8.504–6), which very precisely reiterates πολλά ξεινήια δῶρα | οἷς μέτα καὶ πέπλον . . . Ὑψιπυλείης ('she furnished many guest gifts, among them a cloak of Hypsipyle'; Ap. Rhod. 4.422–3). Pio varies only in using litotes (*nec non . . .*), a trope that functions here as a kind of 'Alexandrian footnote', archly signalling the rebarbative engagement with Apollonius.

cur sanguis, cur corda tepent? quae robora vidi,
 quos animos, nostris pro moenibus agmina quando
 ense metebatis Persae, cum victor Iason
 caesorum innumeros pedibus calcaret acervos!

Why have your blood and heart cooled? What vigour, what courage I saw
 earlier when, before our city walls, you cut down with your sword the
 troops of Perses, when victorious Jason trampled underfoot countless
 heaps of slain adversaries!

(*Suppl.* 10.60–3)

As already noted, the Colchian civil war between Aeetes and Perses, in which the Greek heroes fight on the side of the former, constitutes an extended Valerian episode that is entirely absent from the Hellenistic *Argonautica*. By transmuting this part of Medea's speech into a 'flashback' to that Valerian episode, Pio adroitly affirms his role as continuator, not merely demonstrating awareness of the Flavian poet's deviations from his Hellenistic model, but exploiting those deviations to achieve a more uplifting effect.

While it is usually the case that Pio's departures from Apollonius involve attempts to create a more 'Valerian' narrative, it will be as well to note before moving on that this is not always so. Deviations *from* Apollonius are not necessarily *towards* Valerius. A case in point is the simile at *Suppl.* 9.475–85, which likens the sea divinities propelling the Argo to a boy exercising with a ball in Pio's native Bologna. This reworks Apollonius' original simile, which likens the same action to girls playing with a ball (Ap. Rhod. 4.948–55). Pio's simile thus retains one element of the 'vehicle' of Apollonius' simile (the ball), but transforms the other, producing, as Kobusch observes, an anachronistic homage to his native Bologna and its young men.¹⁶ No less importantly, the chronological leap produces a distinctive authorial 'signature' that fleetingly reminds readers of the Renaissance continuator rather than either ancient poet.¹⁷ Kobusch praises the simile as among the most original passages of the entire supplement.¹⁸ But this is a very circumscribed instance of invention, with no broader thematic implications, and it need not detain us further.

16 Kobusch (2004) 463.

17 In many of the volume's titular formulas, including those of the edition's title page and the incipit to the supplement, Pio identifies himself as 'Pius Bononiensis' ('Pio of Bologna').

18 Kobusch (2004) 463.

The Murder of Absyrtus

In the rest of this essay I propose to examine in detail a single extended episode, that involving the death of Medea's brother Absyrtus, who leads a Colchian fleet in pursuit of the Argonauts. This concentration of focus will facilitate comprehension of the sometimes complex triangular relationships between the texts in question. The chosen episode is arguably the most inventive and successful of Pio's supplement. It proceeds from the initial scheming that lures Absyrtus into an ambush (*Suppl.* 8.490–530) to his brutal slaying and dismemberment at Jason's hands (8.541–81), which is followed by a rousing naval battle from which the Argonauts emerge victorious (9.8–37). This thematically rich sequence features a number of interesting formal elements, including a book division and a poetic invocation. As it happens, this is the first major episode of the supplement, and it demonstrates better than any other Pio's sporadic ingenuity in negotiating the tensions between the demands of his roles as Apollonian translator and Valerian continuator.

The murder of Absyrtus is one of the most unsettling episodes in the Hellenistic *Argonautica*. Apollonius' version is not quite as appalling as a widely attested (and probably older) version, according to which a much younger Absyrtus is kidnapped and slain by Medea, who then casts parts of her brother's dismembered body overboard at intervals during the Argonauts' flight, so that Aeetes' pursuit might be slowed by the necessity of collecting them.¹⁹ But Apollonius' version is gruesome enough, and implicates both Medea and Jason in a base and deceitful murder.²⁰ Jason's ambush of Absyrtus and subsequent mutilation of his corpse (albeit in an expiatory rite) constitute a singularly unsavoury moment in his often problematic heroic career. Lawall has observed that this slaying of an unsuspecting and defenceless adversary entails an abandonment of all heroic values, as well as a transgression of Phineus' advice to be guided by piety.²¹ Moreover, as Fränkel points out, neither the Argonauts' survival nor the success of their mission are at stake here: all that is at risk is the love affair of Medea and Jason—an affair that will prove disastrous for all it touches.²² Inasmuch as it demonstrates Medea's propensity for kin murder, this episode participates in Apollonius' anticipation of the

19 Pherecyd. *FGrH* F 32; Apollod. 1.132–3; cf. Hyg. *Fab.* 23. Ovid has Absyrtus killed in the fields (*Tr.* 3. 9). According to Sophocles (fr. 343 *TrGF* 4) and Callimachus (*Aet.* fr. 8 Pf.), he was killed in Aeetes' palace.

20 Well discussed in Hunter (1987) 131, which I follow here.

21 Lawall (1966) 167.

22 Fränkel (1968) 494.

tragic (Euripidean) fall-out of the love affair. It also contributes to the souring of that love affair: Hutchinson for one sees the killing as the initial source of deterioration in Jason and Medea's relationship.²³

There are plentiful indications that the episode as treated in the Hellenistic *Argonautica* could have no place in a completed version of Valerius' poem.²⁴ If readers of the Flavian epic are afforded glimpses of problems with Jason's character in the second half of the poem, there is little to suggest the drastic collapse of epic level and heroic standards found in Apollonius' account.²⁵ Moreover, the entire episode is premised on the willingness of the Colchians to enter into some manner of negotiation. It is true that, as we have seen, Valerius' Argonauts are minded to return Medea to the Colchians in exchange for free passage, very much like their Apollonian counterparts. In the earlier epic, though, there have already been contacts between the Greeks and the Colchians, and such an exchange has been mooted (Ap. Rhod. 4.339–49). In Valerius' version, by contrast, there has been no contact between the two sides: Juno has manufactured an unrelenting storm to keep them apart, and the Argonauts await its abatement to initiate such discussions (Val. Fl. 8.405–6). Unbeknownst to them, however, Absyrtus has already declared that the return of Medea would not satisfy him, that he will consider no pact whatsoever with the Argonauts, and that the resolution of their differences must come through battle (Val. Fl. 8.270–2). He goes on to declare that his unshakable purpose is the invasion of Greece itself, vengeance upon the entire nation (Val. Fl. 8.275–84)—again a radical departure from the Hellenistic poet. Absyrtus' bloodlust, his specific rejection of negotiating *foedera* with the Greek heroes (8.271–2), leaves no scope for the initial diplomatic contacts and subsequent meetings that lead to his death in the Hellenistic *Argonautica*. In other words, the Argonauts' proposal to exchange Medea for free passage amounts to wishful thinking in Valerius' account, and would have proven to be an instance of what I have elsewhere referred to as 'negative allusion', that is, an embedded reference to a version of the myth that the poet has chosen *not* to follow.²⁶

23 Hutchinson (1988) 128.

24 For the attractive theory that Valerius meant to conclude his epic with the death of Absyrtus, recast along Virgilian lines on the model of the death of Turnus at the close of the *Aeneid*, see Nesselrath (1998), esp. 349–50.

25 Though it should not be overlooked that, upon reaching Colchis, Jason advocates unscrupulous action should honourable expedients fail to achieve the Argonauts' objective: *rebus semper pudor absit in artis!* ('away with propriety in adverse circumstances!', 5.324). On Valerius' Jason and his heroism, see also Castelletti in this volume.

26 Zissos (1999).

Valerius' reshaping of the narrative situation, and his delineation of a far more bellicose and intransigent Absyrtus, would thus seem to rule out Apollonius' version of the Colchian prince's death. The Valerian figure, furthermore, hardly seems susceptible to being beguiled by lavish gifts: here we find corroboration of the earlier claim that the Flavian poet transposed the giving—and associated ekphrasis—of Hypsipyle's cloak to an episode with a less vexed moral context. If Pio was aware of these indications of Valerius' reshaping of Apollonius' storyline, he was unwilling to undertake the kind of drastic plot alterations they call for. Here as elsewhere, we must indulge Pio's initial Apollonian premise and evaluate what he does within that framework.

Pio's narrative recapitulates the major stages of Apollonius' account, including the initial devising of the ambush (*Suppl.* 8.478–500 ~ Ap. Rhod. 4.404–22), its preparation through Medea's parlay with Colchian ambassadors (8.501–30 ~ Ap. Rhod. 4.423–44), the ambush itself (8.540–80 ~ Ap. Rhod. 4.450–81), and then the attack by the rest of the Argonauts on the Colchians anchored nearby (9.7–37 ~ Ap. Rhod. 4.482–91).²⁷ But within this overarching framework Pio goes to considerable lengths to recast Apollonius' account, often in ways that afford Valerian resonance.

In the Hellenistic *Argonautica*, it is Jason who suggests the murder of Absyrtus (Ap. Rhod. 4.404–9). As Hunter observes, it is difficult to gauge whether this had been part of Jason's strategy all along, or whether the idea suddenly comes to him as a means of assuaging Medea in the desperate situation described at the beginning of this essay.²⁸ Either way, the murder plot clearly arises from Jason's initiative; Medea merely helps to put the scheme into effect (Ap. Rhod. 4.410–20). Here we see one of Pio's most determined adjustments to Apollonius' treatment: he strives to absolve Jason by making Medea almost entirely responsible for the decision to murder her brother. It is she who suggests the murder to Jason rather than the reverse (*Suppl.* 8.496–500), and she has to overcome Jason's initial hesitation to agree to the plot:

Phasias his maestum verbis solatur amantem
 ancipitemque iterum vinclis propioribus arcat.
 cogit inire dolos et pernicioosa parare
 exitia Absyrto . . .

27 For the sake of brevity I omit discussion of the narrator's apostrophe to *Amor/Eros* (8.531–40 ~ Ap. Rhod. 4.445–9), a decidedly un-Valerian sequence in which Pio has closely followed the Apollonian model.

28 Hunter (1987) 130–1.

With these words the maiden of Phasis [sc. Medea] soothes her sad lover, and, as he wavers, draws him to her with yet tighter bonds. She compels him to undertake the deception, to contrive the baleful death of Absyrtus.
(*Suppl.* 8.501–4)

Jason clearly has reservations: *incipitem* speaks to incipient deliberations that are promptly cut short by Medea's compulsion, with *cogit inire dolos* constituting a remarkable culminating inversion of Apollonius' account. Medea's constraining power is also suggested by the erotic metaphor of shackles, prepared by the designation *amans*, a surprising term that Valerius never uses of Jason.²⁹ Pio, indeed, repeatedly emphasises Jason's deep love for and devotion to Medea, a departure from both classical epics that Giulio Cesare Pio draws attention to in his commentary. With respect to a subsequent episode, in which Jason soothes Medea after the dire prediction of Circe (9.279–80), Giulio Cesare remarks: *Hoc totum Pii est. Nam quae fecit Iason fecit amore Medae: ideo fingit Pius amorem*. This persistent emphasis reflects an inclination to the post-classical ideal of gallantry; here it also serves Pio's initial strategy of minimising Jason's culpability.

The realisation of the murder plot begins with a parlay between Medea and the Colchian heralds, in which she uses cleverly ambiguous language and magical spells, while plying her interlocutors with gifts in order to lure Absyrtus to his doom (*Suppl.* 8.521–6). She has now been fully established as the guiding intelligence and orchestrator of the plot: her scheming and recurring deceptiveness earn the pejorative epithet *fallax* (8.574).³⁰ Pio follows Apollonius in

29 As noted by Kobusch (2004) 334; Valerius has the term of Medea at 7.23, 107, 412; 8.31, 406 and uses it in a general sense at 7.3, 510.

30 Rather more striking is the application of *fallax* to Absyrtus, who is otherwise sympathetically depicted by Pio. He begins the parlay by inquiring as to Jason's whereabouts with deadly intent: *'Abitne heros per stagna profundi | Cimmerii, soror, Aesonides? Relegitne priora | litora vel portus alios subiturus et urbes?'* | *fallax, ut iuvenes Graios pubemque Pelasgam | excipiat ferro atque inimico remige claudat...* ("Is the son of Aeson [sc. Jason] departing through the waters of the Cimmerian deep, sister? Will he sail once again by the same shores [sc. as on the outward journey], or will he enter other ports and cities?" Thus he spoke, deceptively, that he might catch the Greek youths [sc. the Argonauts] by the sword, might blockade them with hostile vessels ...', *Suppl.* 8.548–52). This constitutes a departure from Apollonius, who reports that Absyrtus 'makes trial in speech of his sister... to see if she might devise some guile against the strangers' (Ap. Rhod. 4.458–62), with a simile capturing his fatal naïveté. Kobusch (2004) 352 is no doubt right to see in Pio's treatment a suggestion that Absyrtus is dangerous and cunning, thereby hinting at the necessity of his elimination. More importantly for present purposes, this constitutes

having the murder take place at a temple of Diana on one of the Brygean islands. Absyrtus takes a single vessel to the island, and proceeds by himself to the temple, where he expects to find Medea alone and ready to betray the Greeks. But Jason is waiting in ambush there, and as Absyrtus begins speaking to his sister, he pitilessly cuts him down. Pio importantly departs from Apollonius in devoting considerably more attention to Absyrtus' death experience, affording it a pathos that is almost entirely absent from the Hellenistic *Argonautica*. The continuator rejects the 'Homeric' objectivity of Apollonius' account, opting instead for the 'subjective style' and an emotionally charged focalisation that involves the reader in and heightens the visceral impact of Absyrtus' death.³¹ Pio emphasises the youth, inexperience and vulnerability of the Colchian prince, while at the same time attributing courage to him in facing his executioner. And whereas Jason's participation in the plotting is diminished in the supplement, his central role in perpetrating the murder is emphatically affirmed.

Among the images invoked in this sequence is that of Absyrtus as a sacrificial victim: *traheretur ad aras | victima Thessalicis iam pridem debita cultris* ('he was drawn to the altar, a victim long destined for Thessalian knives', *Suppl.* 8.529–30).³² This registers a note of irony, given the impiety inherent to murder in a temple precinct. In addition, through the choice of *culter* (a knife 'used to

an astute accommodation of Valerius' more bellicose Absyrtus, bent on chasing down and doing battle with the Argonauts. At the same time, it is worth noting that Medea and Absyrtus are the only humans to be designated *fallax* in the supplement. This suggests something like an 'orientalising' ethnography on Pio's part, a passing implication that verbal trickery and deceptiveness are endemic to the Colchian race. The reference to *Cimerii* is a curiosity. Kobusch deems it a misunderstanding of Apollonius' Greek, but something more subtle is probably at work. The *Orphic Argonautica*, a Latin translation of which Pio also included in his edition of Valerius Flaccus, has the Argonauts visit the Cimmerians on the return voyage (1120), and this is probably Pio's inspiration. Absyrtus' query thus carries a metaliterary charge: should a Renaissance continuator of Valerius Flaccus follow Apollonius Rhodius or the *Orphic Argonautica* (which had not yet been identified as post-classical and suffered literary-critical demotion) in selecting the return route? Related programmatic concerns are aired in the subsequent query (*relegit priora litora ... ?*), so that this sequence can be read as another instance of Pio's self-conscious negotiation of his options as Valerius' continuator.

- 31 Here and elsewhere Pio's embrace of the 'subjective style' reflects a Valerian stylistic preference, for which see e.g. Zissos (2008) xxxiii–xxxiv.
- 32 The basic idea of simile of animal slaying/sacrificing is reproduced from Apollonius (4.468–9), but Pio has switched from simile to metaphor: Absyrtus *is* a sacrificial victim; Jason is a Thessalian butcher. And whereas the Hellenistic model speaks of the slaying of 'a mighty strong-horned bull', Pio employs the more prosaic and pathetic word *victima*

slaughter animals, especially sacrificial victims', *OLD* s.v. 1b) rather than a word for sword (cf. *ensem*, 560), Pio drives home the asymmetry of the confrontation: it could not be further from honourable combat in the prescribed heroic manner. The epithet *Thessalicus*, like its poetic synonym *Haemonio* at 560, drives home the identity of the 'butcher'. Mori has observed that in Apollonius' treatment of the murder the reader's attention is repeatedly diverted from Jason, and this softens the dramatic and psychological impact of the murder.³³ Pio's geographical epithets achieve precisely the opposite effect, helping to keep the identity of the murderer firmly in view.

In discussing Apollonius' account of the ambush, scholars have observed that the brevity of the description of the murder itself diminishes its dramatic force, as does the reader's lack of familiarity with Absyrtus.³⁴ As Mori puts it, 'the reader does not see enough of [Absyrtus] to become emotionally involved with his fate.'³⁵ Pio strives for the opposite effect, maintaining focus on (and focalisation through) the victim, thereby making Absyrtus the emotional centre of the sequence:

qualis cervice iuencus
 saucius a Lybico reboans immane leone
 se rotat et gyris redeuntibus implicat orbes,
 talis ab Haemonio percussus Ponticus ense
 Absyrtus, licet attonitus et corde gelato
 saxeus ...

560

Just as a bullock wounded in the neck by a Libyan lion, bellowing loudly, whirls about, drawing circles with its recurring course, so struggled Pontic Absyrtus, struck by a Thessalian sword, even though stunned and petrified, his heart frozen ...

(*Suppl.* 8.557–62)

The scene achieves vividness and immediacy that is lacking in Apollonius' artfully distracted and emotionally distanced account. Pio starts with a vigorous simile of a bull attacked by a lion, but the kinetic quality of this image is abruptly stilled by *corde gelato saxeus*, which forcefully conveys Absyrtus'

(never used by Valerius), which itself hovers between literal and transferred usage, and so complicates the metaphor.

33 Mori (2008) 217.

34 Wilamowitz-Möllendorff (1924) 195, Mori (2008) 209.

35 Mori (2008) 209.

initial emotional response as the ambush is sprung. From this static moment, Pio develops a striking psychological portrait of Absyrtus, who, recovering from his initial shock, demonstrates an ennobling intrepidity at the moment of his doom, as he squarely faces his assassin:

arma tamen iuvenilibus apta lacertis
corripit et saevo fert comminus ora tyranno.

He nonetheless snatches weapons suitable to his youthful arms and
brings himself face to face with the cruel tyrant.

(*Suppl.* 8.562–3)

Absyrtus' unflinching reaction recalls that of the infant Achilles demonstrating precocious intrepidity in his close encounter with the pelt of the Nemean lion worn by Hercules (*fert comminus ora leoni*, Val. Fl. 1.261). The 'internal' echo further excites readerly sympathy, an effect reinforced by Pio's characterisation of Jason as a *saevus tyrannus*. The derogatory force of this expression is without precedent in either *Argonautica*. Valerius' use of *tyrannus* tends to the pejorative: he does not have it of Jason at any point.³⁶ If, on the whole, Pio tends to 'upgrade' Jason, in this moment he establishes a low point in characterisation from which the hero needs—and soon will achieve—redemption.

At the moment of her brother's death Medea turns away in horror, as she does in the Hellenistic epic (Ap. Rhod. 4.465–7). Pio captures this reaction with an Ovidian paradox, *impietate pia est* (*Suppl.* 8.557; cf. *Met.* 8.477), that coordinates well with the ironic image of sacrifice discussed above.³⁷ In Apollonius, the mention of Medea participates in a strategy of deflection that keeps the emotional focus away from both murderer and victim.³⁸ In Pio, by contrast, it is a galvanising touch, creating an effective, emotionally wrought pause before returning to Absyrtus, whose death agony is described at considerable length. Particularly effective is the description of the youth's vain attempt to staunch with his hands the bleeding from his wounds:

vestibulo in primo postquam manantia frustra
vulnera tentavit geminis compescere palmis,
luctatus multum calida procumbit arena

...

³⁶ See Zissos (2008) 99.

³⁷ The Ovidian echo is well discussed by Rieker (1998) 362.

³⁸ Mori (2008) 210.

In the forecourt [sc. of the temple], after trying vainly to staunch with his two hands the blood flowing from his wounds, [Absyrtus] struggled intensely and then fell dead upon the warm sand . . .

(*Suppl.* 8.564–6)

This vivid account is a well-calibrated escalation of the single wound in the Hellenistic epic (Ap. Rhod. 4.471–3). The impossibility of staunching the flow of blood from multiple wounds captures in retrospect a series of sword thrusts by Jason, an indirect but grimly effective touch that is unlike anything in Apollonius' barer and more emotionally distanced account.

The death scene concludes with another subtle innovation. Whereas Apollonius reports that Jason struck down Absyrtus 'hard by the temple which the Brygi on the mainland opposite had once built for Artemis' (Ap. Rhod. 4.469–70), Pio reports the same spatial reference as the visual experience of Absyrtus as he expires:

Dianaeque tholum moribundo lumine cernit,
quem Brygos sacrasse viros fert certa vetustas.

With his dying eyes he looked upon the Temple of Diana, which the Brygians dedicated to her, as ancient tradition rightly reports.

(*Suppl.* 8.567–8)

By this finely judged touch, the reader is once again drawn in to the young man's experience. At the same time, the reporting of the spatial reference at a perceptual remove neatly encapsulates Pio's compositional dynamic, his recreation, with variation, of the Apollonian episode. A more overt metaliterary effect resides in the appeal to the authority of *certa vetustas*—a sly designation for Apollonius' epic. This is, in other words, the Renaissance version of an 'Alexandrian footnote', which follows Pio's affirmation of creative adaptation with an acknowledgement of literary debt.³⁹

The episode now continues with a grim faithfulness to Apollonius' account, as Jason cuts off the extremities of Absyrtus' corpse, and then licks up and spits out his blood—a gruesome apotropaic ritual meant to forestall a murder victim's vengeance from beyond the grave (*Suppl.* 8.574–7 ~ Ap. Rhod. 4.477–81). As already observed, this sequence is unthinkable for Valerius, and Pio has surely lapsed in including it. But the Bolognese humanist promptly follows up

39 On the 'Alexandrian footnote' in Latin literature, see conveniently Hinds (1998) 2–5.

this dubious moment with a more uplifting ‘Valerian’ coda in which Jason prays for Absyrtus’ induction into Elysium:

exstincto terramque levem placidamque quietam
Tartareasque canes mitem et Minoa precatus
Elysias sedes et amoena vireta piorum.

He prayed that the earth sit lightly upon the deceased, that he enjoy peaceful tranquillity, that the Tartarean hounds and Minos treat him mildly, and that he gain entrance to Elysium and the delightful grassy fields of the blessed.

(*Suppl.* 8.578–80)

This constitutes a significant addition to Apollonius’ sequence, in which Jason’s sole purpose is to forestall retribution from beyond the grave (Ap. Rhod. 4.477–9). The concern manifested for his young victim, perhaps spurred by Absyrtus’ demonstration of bravery in death, ‘improves’ Jason over his Apollonian counterpart. This brief coda also involves an effective use of segmentation, bringing Book 8 to a close with an evocation of post-mortem bliss. Even better, this is a palpably Valerian use of segmentation: after the grim deaths of Jason’s parents and brother, the former anticipating execution at the hands of Pelias’ henchmen, the latter slain before his dying parents’ eyes, Book 1 closes on a note of consolation and serenity, with the family’s induction into Elysium (Val. Fl. 1.827–50).⁴⁰ Valerius’ tranquil underworld scene, and the imminent bliss it promises, offers an effective contrast and antidote to the grim scene of death that immediately precedes it. Through his Elysian evocation Pio strives compactly to create much the same effect at the close of Book 8. This is all the more noteworthy in that the account of Absyrtus’ demise is not yet complete. Through the use of closural motifs (death and consolation) operating in concert with the book division, Pio has, in effect, split the Apollonian episode in two.

The care and attention devoted to this sequence suggest that Pio had identified the death of Absyrtus as a moment of generic crisis in the Hellenistic *Argonautica*. His reworking to this point has taken strides towards mitigating its problematic effects, but a recuperative gesture to recover from the horror and ignominy of Absyrtus’ death is evidently still needed. Pio now provides

40 As Kobusch (2004) 475 well observes, the repetition of *luctusque ignarus Iason* (Val. Fl. 2.1) at *Suppl.* 10.2 is clearly a positional as well as a verbal echo. This neatly attests to Pio’s sensitivity to, and referential use of, Valerian patterns of segmentation.

this. He builds on the closural impact of Absyrtus' death, enhancing the segmentation of the book division by commencing Book 9 with a fresh poetic invocation:⁴¹

Nunc mihi, Calliope, **primae ratis ausa canenti**
 erroresque ducis varios iterumque remensum
 aequor et Adriaco lustratas marmore terras
 adspira!

Inspire me now, Calliope as I sing of the daring deeds of the first ship, of the various wanderings of the leader [*sc.* Jason], of the sea traversed once more, and of the lands passed by on the gleaming Adriatic.

(*Suppl.* 9.1–4)

The sense of epic revitalisation is brought out above all by the appeal to Calliope, patron Muse of that genre. Apollonius, of course, offers nothing of the kind at this point in the narrative. Pio has clearly drawn upon Virgil's invocation at *Aen.* 9.525, *vos, o Calliope, precor, adspirare canenti*.⁴² A more subtle, and more profound, debt of inspiration is owed to Valerius' initial exordium:⁴³

Prima deum magnis **canimus** freta pervia natis
 fatidicamque **ratem**, Scythici quae Phasidis oras
ausa sequi mediosque inter iuga concita cursus
 rumpere flammifero tandem consedit Olympo.

I sing of seas first traversed by mighty sons of gods, and of the fate-speaking ship that, having dared to seek the banks of Scythian Phasis and to burst a middle course through the Clashing Rocks, finally came to rest in fiery Olympus.

(*Val. Fl.* 1.1–4)

41 Note that *iterumque remensum*, with its redoubled sense of repetition for an itinerary that will be, on the narrative level, a first for the Argonauts, carries a programmatic and meta-poetic charge, signalling Pio's retracing of the Argo's return journey in the Hellenistic epic (which did indeed go by the Adriatic). Pio is making his (which is to say, Valerius') choice, and this is a kind of meta-response to Absyrtus' query at 8.548–52, discussed in n. 30 above.

42 Well discussed by Rieker (1998) 362–3; cf. Kobusch (2004) 368.

43 Well discussed by Kobusch (2004) 369.

From the opening verses of the *Argonautica*, Pio picks up the crucial idea of the Argo as the world's first ship (the Flavian poet's most fundamental departure from his Hellenistic predecessor), expressed via *primae ratis*, and the striking personification of the vessel with *ausa*. The effect of this compound imitation, which like the exordium occurs at the start of a book, is to generate a powerful sense of poetic renewal, a fresh Valerian beginning.

The inaugural force of this invocation reinforces the sundering of Apollonius' episode, and the sense of epic reinvigoration carries through in what follows. In the Hellenistic epic the narrative continues with what amounts to a second ambush (Ap. Rhod. 4.482–91). Once Jason has slain Absyrtus, Medea signals to the rest of the Argonauts, who land surreptitiously near the Colchian ship that had conveyed Absyrtus to the rendezvous, and launch a surprise attack on its crew. The Argonauts easily prevail, slaughtering the Colchians to a man, with Jason arriving late, 'eager to give help where none was needed', as Apollonius sardonically states (4.890–1). This treatment is characteristic of the Hellenistic poet, who relegates heroic exploits to the background, often undercutting battle scenes.⁴⁴ Pio radically transforms all this, providing a finely elaborated naval battle in which the Argo and its crew triumph against numerous Colchian vessels:⁴⁵

emicat Aesonides inimica corymba revellens
 rostraque perfringens Argois aemula rostris
 nec minus et laterum tabulas perrumpit inertes. 30
 non secus in molles pernix si forte columbas
 incidit accipiter: cadit haec laniata cruentis
 unguibus. illa ruens resupino pectore rostrum
 experta alarum cadit exagitata fragore

44 Mori (2008) 37, adducing Ap. Rhod. 1.989–1011, 1021–77; 2.1–144; 3.1278–407; 4.482–91.

45 For *inertes* (30), of the Colchian vessels, Giulio Cesare Pio usefully glosses: *nullo artificio factas, temere et impestive deducta in mare, materie et ilico fabrefacta multum magistris ab archetype decidentibus*. This implicitly contrasts the skilful and painstaking construction of the Argo (described at Val. Fl. 1.121–48) with the more hurried and slipshod construction of the Colchian fleet. The Argonauts' victory is, in other words, in no small part a triumph of technology, a crucial theme of the Flavian *Argonautica*. It should be recalled here that Valerius departs from Apollonius in making the Argo the world's first ship. This introduces an awkwardness in the existence of a pursuing Colchian fleet in Book 8: Valerius designates this *subita* . . . *classe* (8.261), implying its hasty construction as a somewhat awkward accommodation of the first-ship tradition to Apollonius' storyline. Pio's *inertes* thus amounts to a microscopic, but astute and evocative, element of Pio's Valerian continuation.

aut plumis nudata suis. sic fluctuat agmen
 et turpi dat terga fugae. subsistit Iason
 contentus vicisse feros sine sanguine Colchos. 35

The son of Aeson [sc. Jason] sprang forth, tearing off the ornaments and the rival prows of enemy vessels with the Argo's own prow, and shattering the unadorned planks of their sides. Much as when a swift hawk happens upon gentle doves: one plummets, mangled by the hawk's bloody talons; another reels, breast upwards, after feeling the force of the beak: it falls propelled by the destruction of its wings or bereft of its feathers. In such a way did the [Colchian] fleet waver and then turn its back in base flight. Jason held up, content to have defeated the fierce Colchians without bloodshed.

(*Suppl.* 9.28–37)

For Apollonius' unglamorous treatment of a surprise attack on a moored vessel and its crew, then, Pio has substituted a more heroic account of an extended naval battle in which the Argonauts triumph over a much larger enemy force. The pride of place afforded the Argo through the choice of a sea battle is a fine Valerian touch—and a neat retrospective justification of Valerius' otherwise grossly anachronistic provision of the world's first ship with a ramming spur (*aere tridenti*, 1.688).⁴⁶ The presence of Jason as commander, as the pre-eminently heroic and only named human protagonist (*emicat Aesonides*), once again departs from Apollonius in a conspicuously Valerian fashion.⁴⁷ From its opening verses the Flavian *Argonautica* emphasises heroic exploits, insisting on Jason's *virtus* and personal authority against Apollonius' initial emphasis on his personal inadequacy.⁴⁸ Pio achieves a no less uplifting effect by having Jason spare the lives of the Colchians after disabling their vessels: his demonstration of martial *virtus* is followed by an act of compassion, which serves punctually to counteract the opprobrium of Absyrtus' killing.

46 See Zissos (2008) 366.

47 Pio's thematic transformation is reflected in an apropos adjustment in imagery. Apollonius' multiple-correspondence simile, featuring kites attacking pigeons and lions sheep (4.485–7), is simplified to a single image: that of hawks attacking doves. The tenor and vehicle of the simile pivot around the word *rostrum* (9.33), which designates the beak of a bird but is also a pervasive nautical metaphor and technical term for the end of a ship's prow (as e.g. at Val. Fl. 2.77). This amounts to a clever 'retrofitting' of Apollonius' simile along Valerian lines.

48 See Zissos (2008) 100.

Part of the appeal that his chosen version of Absyrtus' death held for Apollonius lay in its associated aetiologies. There were various tribes claiming descent from the Colchians who pursued the Argo. One of these was the Absyrtians, whom Apollonius mentions immediately after their eponym's death (Ap. Rhod. 4.480–1).⁴⁹ This kind of Hellenising aetiological material held scant interest for Valerius. Pio includes it (*Suppl.* 9.47–9), but in a postponed position vis-à-vis Apollonius, placing it after the naval battle, along with other *ktisis* ('foundation') myths speaking to the settlement patterns of the various groups of Colchians, none of which return to Colchis, fearing Aeetes' wrath (*Suppl.* 9.38–55; Ap. Rhod. 4.513–21). The incorporation of this material is not especially Valerian in spirit, but the deferred mention of the Absyrtians is well judged, and once again illustrates Pio's efforts to reconcile the roles of Apollonian translator and Valerian continuator.

All in all, the sequence of Absyrtus' murder shows Pio at his best in the rather uneven execution of his literary project. Nowhere else in the supplement does the Bolognese humanist achieve such a compelling—and largely 'Valerian'—recasting over so long a narrative stretch. One should not overlook or attempt to talk away the flaws and inconsistencies in Pio's handling of the episode. But it is an inspired sequence, an interesting fusion of inherited elements and imaginative touches that results in something approaching a viable continuation of Valerius' epic. That Pio achieves so much with this early episode makes it all the more regrettable that elsewhere he rarely strives for like effects, and all too often contents himself with mechanically rendering Apollonius' Greek in Latin hexameters. But any disappointment felt by modern readers must be tempered by recognition of the daunting nature of the task, undertaken by Pio in the early sixteenth century, when widespread awareness of Valerius' text was less than fifty years old. The Roman *Argonautica* is an unusually difficult poem, and it remains all too imperfectly understood some six centuries after Pio undertook to solve the problem of its incompleteness.

49 See Hadas (1932) 53.

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Abstracts of Chapters

2 *Utere bono tuo feliciter*: The Textual Transmission and Manuscript History of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

P. Ruth Taylor-Briggs

This chapter evaluates the vast volume of Valerian textual criticism published since 1970. In the process it puts forward new theories regarding the circulation of *vetustissimi* ('the oldest manuscripts') in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and sweeps away the last threads of a negative prejudice against Carrio and his 'lost' manuscript which has blinkered scholarly opinion since the nineteenth century. The chapter then proceeds to examine the nature of the archetype, noting, in particular, the evidence of considerable glossatory activity, already present at this earliest stage of the extant tradition. Recognition of this glossatory activity offers a clear criterion to those seeking to evaluate variant readings. Fundamental to the value of textual criticism is its ability to serve the needs of literary critics. This chapter concludes by evaluating what impact on our understanding of the poet's artistic merits the recent generation of textual criticism has already made.

3 Poet and Readers: Reflections on the Verbal and Narrative Art of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Michael Barich

This essay considers the *Argonautica* from the reader's perspective as a work of verbal art. The first section raises broad questions that might guide further study of the communication between the poet and his audience, including intertextuality, whose distinctive development in each Roman epic decisively shapes readers' experience of that poem and to a great degree defines its style. It is suggested that more comprehensive examination of the 'mechanisms' of intertextuality in the *Argonautica* is needed to elucidate how the poet signals different kinds of intertextual interaction and guides readers through possibly complex paths of encounter with specific predecessor texts. Previous work on the language of the *Argonautica* is briefly reviewed and observations are offered on its often-noted brevity. A close reading of *Argonautica* 5.1–216 follows, tracing the reader's experience in this section of the poem and illustrating through its details essential qualities of Valerius' narrative. Skilful word choice, effective deployment of rhetorical figures and evocative imagery build a taut and carefully interconnected narrative within which Valerius frequently associates moments of intensity with internal allusions whose effect is often enhanced by intertextual echoes that resonate with the emotion of the *Argonautica*'s narrative moment. The poem's

shifting emotions are carefully modulated and their ebb and flow constitutes a fundamental narrative rhythm in the *Argonautica*. We should strive for a full appreciation of readers' unfolding and cumulative experience of the poem as it is shaped by the *Argonautica*'s stream of artful language.

4 Authorial Poetics in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Alain Deremetz

By using the notion of 'authorial poetics', understood as part of an 'immanent literary history', the intention here is to highlight the way in which Valerius Flaccus expresses and comments upon his conception of the epic genre through the use of allusions, themes and various narrative devices drawn from the work. Beginning with the prologue, where the major themes of the work as a whole are sketched out, this study describes the most striking examples, including: the creation of a literary tradition internal to the work, constructed retrospectively through the use of models and anti-models to which the author claims affiliation; the explicit or implicit processes of positioning (self-positioning in particular) of the author within the social realm, in the domain of literature, and more specifically within the genre. This study is guided by the hypothesis that in citing or appealing to texts with or without the exegetical apparatus that surrounds their use and reception, and in adapting (through alterations or corrections) inherited narratives or fragments of narratives, the poet always reveals the work which he undertakes and the choices he makes; although it is possible to attribute an ethical, political or ideological weight to those choices, this study is restricted to the domain of poetics, which is fertile territory in itself. The lesson that we can draw from this analysis is that Valerius aims to compose the facsimile of the foundational epic that will lead the tradition to Homer, Virgil and Ovid, and presents his work at the same time both as a meta- and as an archi-epic.

5 Valerius Flaccus, Virgil and the Poetics of Ekphrasis

Mark Heerink

Descriptions of works of art in classical poetry are often susceptible to interpretation as instances of *mise en abyme*, i.e. miniature representations of (an aspect of) the work of which they are part. The *Argonautica* features two major instances of ekphrasis: the description of the pictures that adorn the Argo's hull (1.130–48) and the description of the reliefs on the doors of the temple of Sol in Colchis (5.407–55). This chapter shows how both passages, positioned at two crucial moments in the narrative (at the very beginning of the voyage in Book 1 and right after the arrival of the Argonauts in Colchis

in Book 5 respectively) reflect the poetics of the entire epic. The metapoetical significance of the ekphrasis in Book 1 is suggested by its close link to the immediately preceding passage describing the construction of the Argo. It is argued that the 'Callimachean' and Ovidian subject matter of the pictures on the hull should be read accordingly; it points in the direction of Valerius' positioning of his epic vis-à-vis his main model, Virgil's *Aeneid*. This ekphrasis is clearly linked to the description of the temple in Book 5, which also features the construction of the Argo and has 'Ovidian' overtones as well. For instance, Valerius reads his main model—Virgil's description of the temple of Juno in *Aeneid* 1—through Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which the palace of Sol is described (2.1–19). Together, these two interconnected ekphraseis reveal Valerius' self-conscious positioning of his *Argonautica* in the epic tradition.

6 Myth and Mythopoesis in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

James J. Clauss

This chapter explores some of the ways in which the poet manipulates the Argonautic narrative and proposes that his management of the tradition serves not only intertextual (literary) purposes but reflects the creation of a myth that positions the Flavian dynasty favourably within cosmic, world and Roman history and thereby counters Augustan myth with a pre-Trojan War nautical account that offsets Julian claims to absolute power in Rome.

7 War and Love in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Marco Fucecchi

The idiosyncratic co-existence of love and war not only stands as a peculiar feature of Valerius' rewriting of the Argonautic myth, but also offers a privileged vantage point for evaluating the poem's relationship with the whole epic tradition, namely the way it positions itself between its 'exemplary model' (Apollonius' Hellenistic epic on the voyage of the Argo) and its influential 'code models' (Virgil's *Aeneid* above all, but also Homer's *Iliad*). Indeed, while in Apollonius' *Argonautica* love (and the 'magic' of love) embodies the very subverting force of the traditional war epic plot, paving the way to problematisation and redefinition of the heroic ideal, Valerius' outstanding effort to include war (and civil war in particular) within the story marks an important step towards metaliterary discussion of epic categories (a typical feature of Flavian poetry). In this paper I will try to deal with these issues mostly by illustrating the emblematic meaning of some passages from the second half of the poem.

8 Philosophical Ideas in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Attila Ferenczi

This chapter analyses the literary function of representing philosophical ideas in the text of the *Argonautica*. The introductory passage gives some preliminary theoretical remarks on the possibility of differentiating between the philosophical and non-philosophical components of an epic narrative: a boundary that the ancient tradition of criticism blurred and trespassed, time and time again. The first part of the study examines the simultaneous presence of different and seemingly incompatible notions of *fatum* in the council of gods in Book 1. The analysis focuses on the recipient of the text, and shows that the contradiction between Stoic determinism and the scope of personal activity was familiar to the Roman reader. The second part examines personal responsibility and divine intervention, focusing on the council of gods in Book 5. Valerius applies these references to philosophical ideas in a pointed and sometimes inconsistent way in order to increase the aesthetic effect of his poem.

9 *Romanas veluti saevissima cum legiones Tisiphone regesque movet*: Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* and the Flavian Era

Neil W. Bernstein

This chapter surveys multiple points of intersection between Valerius' poem and the world of his contemporary audience. The first three sections of the chapter examine human beings' perceptions of the purposes and outcomes of cultic work. The proem's emphasis on religious devotion may speak to the contemporary need for the restoration of a proper relationship with the gods after the upheaval of civil war. Divine perspectives contrast with those of human beings, thereby revealing human ignorance of fate and divine manipulation. Jupiter's *Weltenplan* presents a positive analogue to Vespasian's rule, yet is inconsonant with the hostile world through which the Argonauts actually pass. Hostile divine intervention at Lemnos and Cyzicus further undermines both Jupiter's optimistic claims and the conceptual grounding for human beings' cultic work. The *Argonautica* consistently negates the possibility of a beneficent relationship between populations and their gods. The reader is accordingly invited to doubt the Flavian promise of stability, prosperity and imperial expansion. The chapter's second part examines the political world of the *Argonautica*. Tyranny is the default mode of government in the narrative, and violent resistance erupts as soon as the tyrant's grip is compromised. Multiple scenes reflect indirectly upon the conflict between the senatorial class and the emperor. Conflict between family members, friends and fellow citizens forms the narrative superstructure of two 'cold' civil wars in Iolcus and in heaven and one 'hot' civil war at Colchis. The epic generates a new model of heroism in order to confront a world where neither human beings nor gods encourage trust or

permit moral certainty and where the virtuous cycle of reciprocity that underwrites social relations in Roman aristocratic society has been irrevocably corrupted. The *Argonautica*'s mythical narrative reflects the perceptions of an audience of recent survivors of a civil war.

10 A Hero with a Sandal and a Buskin: The Figure of Jason in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*
Cristiano Castelletti

Scholars disagree about the interpretation of the figure of Jason in Valerius Flaccus, some considering him a hero throughout the poem, while others see in him the exact opposite. This may be due to the fact that this character draws both on his Greek counterpart in Apollonius and on Virgil's Aeneas, and on the Jason of Greek and Latin tragedies. Besides, a comprehensive assessment of the figure of Jason cannot overlook the evolutions induced by the structure of the poem, which is divided into two thematically and teleologically disconnected halves. During the first part of the poem, Valerius Flaccus sets out to rehabilitate Jason's heroism, correcting the negative traits of his *amechanos* Apollonian counterpart, and endowing him with Virgilian features, which make him more like Aeneas. But Jason, although he is undoubtedly the *ductor* of the expedition, is not a second Aeneas. The *pietas* through which the Virgilian protagonist defines himself has no equivalent in Valerius' hero. Jason is not the son of a goddess, and does not experience the trusting closeness with the divine that is the privilege of the Trojan prince. In the second part of the poem the introduction of Medea first challenges Jason's heroic status, and then gradually leads both characters towards a tragic outcome. In his quest for heroic glory, Jason is at once spurred on and frustrated by tyranny. In this respect, Hercules provides an example for Jason, and at certain points they tread a parallel path, but their destinies turn out quite differently. Fulfilling Jupiter's vision of heroism, Hercules will reach glory in the sky, while Jason will eventually develop into a tragic figure. But Jason is neither completely innocent, nor entirely guilty, just as he is not an example of pure heroism, nor an incarnation of perverseness and negativity. His character provides a reflection of the overall evolution of the poem. Jason, who embodies the antithesis between epic exaltation and tragic pessimism, demonstrates the antinomies embedded in Valerius Flaccus' literary compositions.

11 Medea: From Epic to Tragedy
Peter J. Davis

Medea's story is not only one of the most frequently told in Greek and Roman literature, but also one of the most complex, for her roles include Jason's virgin-lover in Colchis, murderous wife in Iolcus, abandoned mother in Corinth, poisonous stepmother in

Athens, potential filicide in Colchis and even wife of Achilles in the underworld. But of these six episodes two stand out: the epic story of the princess who helps the foreign hero and the tragic tale of the woman who kills her sons.

This chapter takes as its starting point the ways in which Valerius reconciles these two Medeas, comparing the Roman poet's approach to that of Apollonius of Rhodes. In particular, it underlines Valerius' different conception of the nature of the Argo's voyage as a turning point in human history and his use of various narrative techniques (most notably prolepsis). Particular attention is paid to the ways in which the poem looks beyond its own narrative limits, especially to the events represented in the Medea-tragedies of Euripides and Seneca, to Medea's links with important figures in the Trojan War, most notably Thetis and Helen, as well as with other significant mythological figures like Nausicaa and Proserpina, and to its use of divine machinery to underpin the poem's ideological framework.

12 Teamwork, Leadership and Group Dynamics in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* Helen Lovatt

The *Argonautica* is unique among ancient epic stories for its focus on the quest as a group endeavour. Whereas Odysseus' crew are one of the obstacles to his return, and Aeneas' fellow refugees are his responsibility, Jason has to gather a team to make it possible to fulfil his mission. How does Valerius develop this group ethos? How important are the other Argonauts for Jason's mission? To answer this question, a number of passages are examined: first the catalogue of the Argonauts in Book 1 (who is included; what is different from previous versions; why they are there; building a team = building epic credentials; the importance of Homeric figures); then several episodes in which the Argonauts act as a group, the battle against Cyzicus and his men in Book 3, which gives several Argonauts the opportunity for misplaced heroic moments, culminating with Jason, and their miserable reaction, mitigated by Mopsus' rituals; the abandonment of Hercules, in which Jason plays little part; the deaths of Idmon and Tiphys; the early part of the war against Perseus in Book 6, in which Castor and Telamon have *aristeiai*; the final scene in which the Argonauts actively plan to abandon Medea. Jason is first among equals, more king-like than in Apollonius but still relying on his crew.

13 My Family and Other Enemies: Argonautic Antagonists and Valerian Villains Robert Cowan

It is of immense significance for the ideology of an epic whether its antagonists are depicted as morally reprehensible villains, deserving of defeat and destruction at the hands of the protagonist. Such a depiction tends simultaneously to reflect and con-

struct a worldview based around stark moral polarities whose boundaries justifiably can and indeed positively should be policed by the employment of violent and usually deadly force. Epics where the moral excellence of the protagonist and the moral turpitude of the antagonist are compromised tend to construct and reflect a more complex morality, in which right and wrong are not absolutes, or at least no one figure or side has a monopoly on them. In a third category, the moral chaos of civil war totally dissolves the distinction between hero and villain. Valerius' *Argonautica* self-consciously plays with these competing ideologies and their respective types of antagonist. It sets heroic, civilising Argonauts and monstrous, tyrannical villains in stark moral contrast. Simultaneously, it problematises this polarity, not to produce the moral complexity of the *Iliad* or *Aeneid*, where there is right and wrong on both sides, but to taint its heroes with the villainy of their opponents. This paradox reflects and contributes to the poem's paradoxical depiction of Jupiter's Iron Age *Weltenplan* as civilising progress and destructive decline. This chapter explores the paradox and its implications, focusing on the themes of tyranny, Gigantomachy and civil war, and on the figures of Pelias, Aetes, Amycus, Laomedon, Perses and Cyzicus.

14 Virgilian Prophecy and the Reign of Jupiter in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*
Randall T. Ganiban

Though Valerius' epic tells the tale of Jason and his quest for the Golden Fleece, its language, themes and structure are greatly influenced by a non-Argonautic poem, Virgil's *Aeneid*. The relationship between the two, however, is complex, as recent scholarship has shown with increasing clarity and insight. This paper builds on intertextual examinations of the relationship between the *Aeneid* and the *Argonautica* by exploring the council of the gods and Jupiter's major prophecy in *Argonautica* 1.

Before the Argonauts depart on their expedition, Valerius portrays a divine council, featuring an exchange between the sun god Sol and Jupiter. This episode is a striking Valerian innovation. No such scene exists in Apollonius' *Argonautica*. Although its models go back to appeals to Zeus in Homer (Thetis' in *Iliad* 1 and Athena's in *Odyssey* 1), the most important intertext is Venus' interaction with Jupiter in *Aeneid* 1, which results in the epic's foundational prophecy. Valerius' use and transformation of the Virgilian episode thus raises our expectations for its potential significance for interpreting the *Argonautica*. At the same time, it displays Valerius' frequent intertextual practice of adopting the structure of Virgilian scenes but transforming their thematic or ideological meaning. This paper examines the divine council and prophecy in Book 1 (498–573) and argues that Valerius' Jupiter offers a worldview which rejects a Virgilian outlook (despite the Virgilian framework employed), revises standard ideological interpretations of the Argonautic expedition (and navigation more generally)

as either progress or crime, and makes moral ideals subservient to political supremacy. Valerius' choice of Sol as interlocutor in this episode will also be shown to contribute significantly to the characterisation of Jupiter, his regime and its values.

15 Ovid and Valerius Flaccus

Alison Keith

After Virgil's *Aeneid*, no text so thoroughly informed the early imperial Roman literary imagination as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (published 8 CE). This chapter examines the impact of the literary and imperial programmes of the *Metamorphoses* on Valerius' mythological epic, for the Roman imperial *Argonautica* is the earliest extant example of imperial Roman mythological epics' large-scale negotiation with the *Aeneid* through the lens of the *Metamorphoses*. I argue that Valerius draws on Ovidian subjects, themes and poetic techniques to trace fissures in the optimistic Virgilian epic paradigm and illuminate the martial and marital themes of his own epic.

16 Lucan and Valerius Flaccus: Rerouting the Vessel of Epic Song

Tim Stover

This chapter analyses Valerius' dynamic engagement with his most recent epic predecessor, the poet Lucan. It suggests that Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, a tale of internal division and collective suicide, influenced Valerius' poetic programme by providing him with a point of departure for his own poetic enterprise. It examines the manner in which Valerius recontextualises the wording, imagery and themes of the Lucanian text in order to reroute the epic genre away from the poetics of deconstruction that he found in his predecessor. By focusing especially on categories such as heroism, glory, exemplarity and the *aristeia*, I argue that Valerius engages with the *Bellum Civile* in order to enact a poetics of amelioration and reconstruction.

17 Valerius Flaccus and Seneca's Tragedies

Emma Buckley

This chapter examines the influence of Senecan tragedy on Valerius' *Argonautica*. First I offer an overview of the influence of Seneca's tragic works on Book 1, arguing that Valerius draws upon Seneca in articulating a 'Roman' socio-political outlook influenced by the claustrophobic court-intrigue and tyranny of the Atreus of Seneca's *Thyestes*. I then suggest that Valerius frames the *Argonautica*, in narratological terms, as a kind of Senecan tragedy, as Pelias' 'tragic-prologue' provides the impetus for the Argo's voyage in a way influenced by Seneca's *Hercules*. Finally I suggest that Valerius

undercuts an overtly 'optimistic' narrative of the Argo's progress by alluding to Seneca's pessimistic attitude to the *nefas* ('crime') of seafaring, especially as seen in the 'Argonautic Odes' of the *Medea*. By such means Valerius uses Senecan tragedy to offer a counterweight to the recuperated epic narrative that is the stuff of Book 1. The second half of the chapter examines two specific Senecan case studies: the Senecan *Medea* and the Senecan *Hercules* plays. Starting with the *Medea*, I show that in addition to other obvious influences—Apollonius' and Ovid's *Medeas*, Virgil's *Dido*—Valerius pays special attention to the Senecan anti-heroine in Books 5–8. Using the character of *Medea* to confront the future tragedy more aggressively than previous authors, Valerius tests the generic tension between tragedy and epic to breaking point: as the unfinished epic breaks off, Valerius' *Medea* has already assumed the status of tragic Fury that she occupies in the Senecan *Medea*. But Valerius' use of Senecan tragedy is not uniformly pessimistic. In dealing with the character of *Hercules*, Valerius reprises the Senecan *Hercules Furens* in the Hylas-episode at Mysia, but then goes on to rework another play attributed to Seneca, the *Hercules Oetaeus*, into *Hercules*' final exploit in the *Argonautica*, the liberation of Prometheus. By presenting *Hercules* here as already a quasi-divine figure, Valerius uses (pseudo-)Senecan material to 'triumph' over tragedy. This alternative narrative route, which provides a sense of resolution and closure not to be found in the *Argonautica* 'proper', allows Valerius' epic to find an escape-route from the literary overdetermination of Seneca's *Medea* and to hold out the prospect, however distant, that, even if the Argonauts cannot escape the slide into tragedy in the *Argonautica*, the new Jovian-directed world order in which Roman mastery is guaranteed still holds good.

18 The Epics of Statius and Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Ruth Parkes

The relationship between the Statian epics and Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* is a burgeoning field of research. This chapter takes up some current trends regarding poetic self-consciousness and allusive practice and suggests thematic engagement as an area ripe for further examination. Working from the position that both the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid* drew on the *Argonautica*, it considers Statius' epigonal status as Valerius' successor. It suggests that the *Achilleid* exploits its belatedness to evoke a sense of destiny and that both Statian texts' oblique reworking of Argonautic material in accordance with current critical sensibilities can be viewed as a polemical literary gesture. It also considers Statius' use of Valerius in light of his technique of multiple imitation, including his practice of alluding to the *Argonautica*'s model passages (typically from Virgil and Ovid) as well as the *Argonautica* itself. Passages considered include Hypsipyle's recollection of the Argonauts' arrival (*Theb.* 5.335–485), Tydeus' ambush (*Theb.* 2.482–743),

the description of Chiron's home (*Ach.* 1.106–18), Thetis' desire for a storm (*Ach.* 1.43–98), and Calchas' vision (*Ach.* 1.526–35).

19 Valerius Flaccus in Silius Italicus

Antony Augoustakis

This chapter aims to address the influence of the *Argonautica* on the *Punica*. I follow the view that Silius began his poem around 81 CE, when Valerius had completed a big portion of his *Argonautica*. Commentators of Silius point to verbal borrowings from Valerius, but it is clear that Silius borrows from Valerius thematic materials as well. I offer a comparative study of the prophecies of Jupiter in *Punica* 3 and Proteus in *Punica* 7 with the prophecy in *Argonautica* 1, of the suicide at Saguntum in *Punica* 2 with the death of Jason's parents and their katabasis to Elysium in *Argonautica* 1, of the death of Pyrene in *Punica* 3 with the abduction of Hylas in *Argonautica* 3, and of the monstrous serpent of Bagra in *Punica* 6 with the Sigeon monster in *Argonautica* 2. All these episodes point to the exploitation of intertext and context from Valerius Flaccus.

20 *Interpres operis alieni?* Giovan Battista Pio's Continuation of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Andrew Zissos

The *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus is famously incomplete: it breaks off abruptly after the 467th line of Book 8. For Renaissance readers who, in the decades following the appearance of the *editio princeps* (Bologna, 1474), could read Valerius Flaccus in an ever wider assortment of editions, the narrative void must have screamed out for a remedy. This was provided by the Bolognese humanist scholar Giovan Battista Pio. Pio wrote, in Latin hexameters, a conclusion to Valerius' incomplete epic, which he appended to his annotated edition of 1519. Pio's effort, which runs to more than 1,400 verses, importantly places Valerius Flaccus among the ancient Latin poets who, beginning in the Renaissance, were made subjects of *supplementa auctorum*. This chapter explores the compositional techniques and principles followed by Pio in producing his supplement. It is clear that Pio's major source of inspiration for rounding out the narrative was Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*. The Hellenistic epic was, of course, Valerius' most important narrative source, but it was as often Valerius' foil as his model. In the headings to his three supplementary sections, Pio characterises his composition as a translation of the Greek poem into Latin hexameters. But this is somewhat misleading, and the Renaissance editor frequently allows himself a measure of freedom in rendering the Hellenistic text, sometimes in ways that demonstrate his awareness of

fundamental incompatibilities between the Hellenistic and Flavian *Argonauticas*. The purpose of this analysis is to elucidate the complicated triangular relationships between the texts in question, putting on display Pio's ingenuity in negotiating the tensions between the demands of his chosen roles as Apollonian translator and Valerius-continuator.

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